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## THE RADIANT LIFE



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TORONTO

# THE RADIANT LIFE

BY

RUFUS M. JONES

Author of

*"New Eyes for Invisibles," "Spiritual Energies,"*

*"Pathways to the Reality of God,"*

etc.

"Arise shine; for thy light is come, and the  
glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Thou  
shalt see and be radiant and thy heart shall  
thrill and be enlarged"      Isaiah LX: 1-5

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## PREFACE

This book, which I am calling *The Radiant Life*—because in spite of the darkness of the time some gleams of radiance have got into the book—is a companion volume to *New Eyes for Invisibles*. One does not need to have attained radiance before reading it any more than one needs to have attained purity of heart and meekness and successful peace-making before reading Christ's Beatitudes. Bacon said: "Reading maketh a full man," and perhaps reading about the Radiant Life may to some degree dispel the enveloping gloom and increase the radiance, which just now is very much needed as a quality of life. The first Chapter of the book was given as the William Ayres Lecture in Lansing, Michigan. The chapter entitled "The Spell of Immortality" was given as the Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality at Harvard University. The chapter on "The Resurgence of Faith" was printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December 1943, and is included here by permission of the *Atlantic Monthly Company*. For the early part of the chapter on "Types of Mysticism" I have drawn somewhat on the Article on "Mysticism," which I wrote for *Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*," with the permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York City. But I have completely rethought and rewritten every part of that early section of the chapter. The other chapters of the book are meditations on great spiritual issues of life.



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## THE RADIANT LIFE



CHAPTER I

THE PROGRESS OF THE SOUL

I

*The Lighted Luster*

Emerson closed his essay on "Love" with these words: "We need not fear that we can lose anything by the progress of the soul. The soul may be trusted to the end. That which is so beautiful and attractive must be succeeded and supplanted only by what is more beautiful and so on forever."

That is an over-optimistic account of human progress, for there are terrible back-washes in the onward progress of the race, and even love of a very high order can wane away and change into something else, not so beautiful and attractive as Emerson's glowing picture portrays.

But when the soul does actually progress and has its love fed and nourished by that Love which Dante discovered "moves the sun and other stars," that is, is eternally grounded, there are no human limits to its expansion and amplitude. "You cannot discover the boundaries of the soul," Heraclitus said, "by traveling in any direction." It seems no doubt a bit of religious aristocratic pride in the midst of the welter of bombed cities and invaded countries and war camps and actual slums and sinking ships and unfed children, to talk of the progress of the soul and the immortal beauty of love, since there are a great many persons in our world whose souls, so far as our minds can see, will make no progress, but in spite of all the temporary darkness and the

eclipse of the higher values of life, we must go on interpreting the eternal aspects and the higher laws of the human soul. While we are talking on high-sounding themes it will be well for us, however, to remember that the truest love does not run smooth, but is often blood-red with sacrifice. Our danger, however, is not that we shall talk of love in too exalted terms, but that we shall treat it in too commonplace a fashion. If love is to be the spring and source of the progress of the soul, as Plato and Dante and Emerson and many other geniuses of the race have prophesied, it must have a touch of eternity to it, and it must bring an unwonted splendor to life.

William Law, a very wise guide in all matters which have to do with the progress of the soul, said: "There is but one salvation for all mankind and *that is the life of God in the soul*. You have no true religion but in and by that spirit of love which is God Himself living and working in you. Turn therefore inwards and all that is within you will demonstrate the presence and power of God in your soul."

Life at its best, when the eternal Beauty shines into it, is a radiant affair. John Woolman—dear man—said: "Some glances of real beauty may be seen in their faces who dwell in true meekness." L. P. Jacks of Oxford some years ago wrote a remarkable essay on "The Lost Radiance of Christianity." I am profoundly concerned to have this lost radiance *recovered* and made once more an essential feature of our Christianity. And I am inclined to believe that we shall not see the evidence that there is a genuine progress of the soul until we recover that radiance which was such a striking feature of the Gospels and of the life of St. Francis and the other saints who, like him, "ran away to God."

Lockhart reports, in his "Life of Sir Walter Scott," a con-

versation in which the novelist said that the pictures of Byron give no idea of the beauty of Byron's face. "The lustre," he said, "is there in the pictures, but it is *not lighted up*." I am eager to find out what lights up the luster and restores the radiance of life. A great cause does it, a great purpose does it, a great faith does it, a great love does it.

Professor W. H. Sheldon has said that "Happiness is essentially a state of going somewhere whole-heartedly." It is equally true of this radiance of life, which is deeper than happiness, that it comes when you are "going somewhere whole-heartedly." But ideas and professions that "lie bed-ridden," as Coleridge puts it, "in the dormitory of men's souls," do not do it. It is not got by speculating and arguing. Chesterton was quite right when he wrote his lines:

Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore  
On tortured puzzles from our youth,  
We know all labyrinthine lore;  
We are the three Wise Men of yore  
And we know all things but the truth.

The greatest things in the world are not reached by argument. Some experiences of life come like a vernal equinox, or like the radiance of sunrise, and there is no longer any need of argument; you are in the presence of an immutable fact of life.

Pascal had a transforming experience which colored all the rest of his life. He expressed it in broken gasps of joy, written at the time of the experience and sewed into his coat, to be found after his death: "Certainty, joy, certainty, feeling, sight, joy, joy, joy, tears of joy." He had here an installment of life come into him, like the fragrance of Mary's ointment. Unfortunately he held a theory of human life which did not encourage the expression of radiance, and this exuberance of joy was discovered only after Pascal's

death. Too often it has been the inscription on the tombstone that has announced the triumphant note of life and not the lighted luster on the face during life-time.

The Kennebago Mountains are visible in the far horizon of my home in Maine, but they come into sight only when the wind is north-west and has blown the sky clear of fog and mist and cloud. Then there they are, in all their distant purple glory. But we know that they are there all the time, when the wind is east or south, though we cannot see them, and we say to our visitors, wait until the wind comes round and blows from Saskatchewan, and then you will see our mountains which are over there in our far sky-line! Some persons' luster lights up like that only when the wind is in the right quarter. I am pleading for a type of life that is sunlit and radiant, not only in fair weather and when the going is smooth, but from a deep inward principle and discovery which makes it lovely and beautiful in all weathers.

I went many years ago, in London, to visit Baron Friedrich von Hügel, who was at that time one of the foremost philosophical thinkers in Europe, and the leading interpreter of mystical religion in the world. It was a momentous event in my life to talk freely with this extraordinary man of the matters that meant the most to me of anything in the universe, but the most memorable feature of the visit came as I was saying good-by. He said to me, "Before you go I want to tell you of the four conditions of life which must be fulfilled before anyone can be canonized a saint in my Church (the Roman Catholic). He, or as is more often the case, *she* must have been throughout life loyal to the Faith of the Church. In the second place the person must have been heroic. He must have faced danger and difficulty in a magnanimous and unconquerable spirit, and have done what seemed impossible for a person to do. In the

third place, the person who is to rank as a saint must have been the recipient of powers beyond his ordinary human capacities. He must have been the organ of higher forces than those which appear to belong to human nature as such, so that an element of the miraculous gets expressed through his life and deeds. And, finally, in the fourth place, through good report and evil report, through prosperity and loss of it, in the 'mountain top moments and in the dull round of everyday life, he must, she must, have been radiant." The old philosopher and mystic stood up in front of me, half a head taller than I was, and he raised his hands as high in the air as he could reach and said: "They may possibly be wrong about those first three conditions, but they are gloriously right about that fourth condition—a saint must be *radiant*."

I suppose very few of my readers will be canonized, and the writer will certainly not be, but if we can have the beauty of the Lord our God upon us, the grace of Christ with us, and sunlight and joy in our hearts, we shall in so far demonstrate the progress of the soul and we shall reveal at least one trait of the saint.

I was speaking once of the importance of having one's face lighted up, and after the service was over a woman with a very plain face, of which she was duly conscious, came forward and asked me what I would do if I had a face like hers! I told her that I had long been struggling with a similar problem, and had discovered that if you can light it up with inward radiance any face you've got is good enough. But there should be a corollary at the end, to the effect that saints never know that they are radiant. They are not conscious of the shine on their faces. It is a by-product of the life, not a purposeful aim. The finest inscription in the Harvard Chapel is the one to the memory

of Andrew Peabody: "For thirty-six years he walked among the professors and students of Harvard College and *wist not that his face did shine.*"

I may well end this aspect of my subject with the testimony of Henry Drummond, whom I have admired from the days of my youth. "The contribution of Christianity," he said, "to the joy of living, perhaps even more to the joy of thinking, is unspeakable. The joyful life is the life of larger mission," and then he points out quite rightly that this joy of life is the result of having some program of service to humanity, that is, of "going somewhere wholeheartedly."

So, with something of the seer,  
Must the moral pioneer  
From the future borrow;  
Plant the wastes with dreams of grain,  
And on midnight's sky of rain,  
Paint the golden morrow.

## II

*Other Signs of the Progress of the Soul*

The soul is the primary reality one must believe in, for one can hardly believe in God effectively if he does not believe in the soul within himself. When that primary fact is settled we may proceed to consider the signs of its progress. The first Psalm I ever learned said that a certain kind of person was like a certain kind of tree—one planted by brooks of water. They are alike in just one point, they both *grow*. Growth is one of the striking notes of the Bible. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, they spin not." They let the forces of life operate. It is not effort, it is not struggle that furthers growth. It is



contact with the forces of life that does it. A good many persons expect the Kingdom of God to come suddenly by a relief expedition from the sky, but Jesus said that it would come like the growth of a tiny seed. It is like a mustard seed. It is like yeast. You start a tiny germ of life and the growth is sure to follow; first the blade, then the stalk, then the ear, and finally the full corn in the ear. It grows the farmer knows not how. It is a mystery, but not a miracle, for life at every level is a normal process.

✓ The calming of the mind, the elimination of fear, the contact with reality, are essential for the progress of the soul. Jesus has given us a striking instance of the calming power of His touch. He stepped into the house where Simon Peter lived and found his wife's mother sick with a fever. "He took her by the hand and immediately the fever left her." We have been learning how many of our fever heats are due to states of mind, which first of all need to be calmed. The mind and the body are strangely intertwined, and in many cases the calming of the mind brings healing to the body. When George Fox discovered that the Ocean of light and love flows over the ocean of darkness, it turned him into a powerful engine of life for his generation. When St. Paul discovered that through the strength of Christ in him he was able for all situations, he had mastered "the peril of unsettlement"—he could say in the face of a crisis "none of these things unsettle me." T. S. Eliot, with much wisdom, has a line about the importance of listening for "The uninterrupted news that grows out of silence."

The world is full of new noises, new perils of unsettlement. I have much sympathy with the blundering American school boy who was asked under what system Europe was governed in the Middle Ages, and who answered with the "boner": "It was the fuddle system." Disturbing as-

saults beat in on us from every direction and we wonder whether the world has not returned to "the fuddle system." But, after all, what tends to unsettle us most is the dull daily friction, the slow wear and tear and attrition of life—what Hegel called *die Ohnmacht der Natur*, the natural breakdown of things. The hardest thing to bear, I think, is the stupid rolling on of the dull insensible cartwheel, that blindly goes over and crushes without any purpose what is most loved and dearest. "Ole man river, he ain't sayin' nuthin', he just goes rollin' erlong."

We must discover a principle of calm and power so that we may not only "stand the universe," but be triumphant and joyous in our life and work. That state cannot be got, I am quite sure, by methods of detachment, by reducing our desires. We may talk with as much enthusiasm as we will of the simple life, of the Franciscan ideal, we cannot bring our desires down to zero. And if we did succeed in reaching the annihilation of desire, we should with it lose the values of life. A social worker, in the sad area of one of our large cities, knocked on the door of a pitiful home. A woman opened the door a crack and put her foot against it, and said through the opening: "You needn't come in here, me and my husband we don't take no interest in nothing." This, of course, was not voluntary reduction of desire, but however it comes about, when one takes "no interest in nothing," life has ceased to matter!

The rich and genuine life comes not that way. It comes by a new and greater *attachment*, by the discovery of a wider reference. It is not annihilation of desire we want, but the passion of higher loyalties. It is amazing to see Christ going about His world kindling a faith, calming lives, quieting fevers, eliminating fears, ordering disordered lives, bringing peace to the heavy-laden, and an-

nouncing forgiveness to hopeless sinners. He lived His life and did His work with a pretty clear vision of the Cross at the end. If we are to take the story of the temptation seriously, as we should do, it is evident that very early in His mission He chose the dangerous way and refused to conform to the popular expectation, which would have been the easy way. There could be only one outcome after that choice, and He knew what the issue of His way of life must be. But, in spite of the forecast of the end, it was one of the most joyous lives ever lived, the joy of the Son always and everywhere about the Father's business. It was perfectly natural and fitting that His final legacy to His disciples should have been the bequest of His joy—"My joy I leave with you"—and that His greatest follower should have closed all his Epistles with the words: "The grace—the consummate beauty—of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

One of the master secrets of life is the cultivation of *serenity*. If we could get the calming hand laid on our spirits there would come an enormous increase of spiritual power. I have watched great tennis players and I have seen that the secret of their success is the *serene stroke*. The ordinary player rushes nervously at the ball and hits it with no time for reflection or discrimination. The great player acts as though he had twenty minutes to decide what to do with the situation and just where to place the ball. The player's mind is freed from nervous response. He surveys the field with serenity, and his calm insight dominates his stroke. Brother Lawrence in his early life was unusually awkward, and broke the dishes he washed for the brotherhood, but when he became organized and calmed through "the practice of the presence of God," he not only acquired serenity, but he took on a spaciousness and amplitude of

mind which all the brothers took note of. There used to be a member of the British Cabinet whom the Prime Minister called "our center of calm." How deeply that center of calm is needed in the Cabinets of the Nations today!

The Harvard orator who commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the birth of President Charles W. Eliot, said of him, "He was a serene and adventurous spirit." Some persons are adventurous but make it impossible for anybody associated with them to be serene. Others are *just serene*, with no spirit of adventure to disturb their peace and quietude. The great life is a noble fusion of adventure and serenity.

I think it was Matthew Arnold who wrote the lines:

Beneath the stream, shallow and light, of what we say we  
are;

Beneath the stream, as light, of what we think we are,  
There flows, with noiseless current, obscure and deep, the  
central stream of what we are indeed.

One of the most striking effects of this calming hand is the acquisition of *patience*. It is beyond question a supreme virtue. To stand the rub and grind, the delays and frustrations, and, what is harder, the dull drag of things, and to go right on! That is evidence of the progress of the soul. Two or three times St. Paul calls God, "the God of all patience." It must be so. Think of the delays and frustrations of making a Kingdom of God out of us! One trouble with us humans is that *we* do not have an eternity to do things in. One thing crowds upon another. We see time slipping away, so much to do, so little done, and death in the offing. But perhaps, after all, the biggest thing is not getting our task finished; it may be getting a calm and patient spirit, that is buoyant and joyous, that suffers long and

is kind. He that *believeth* shall not make haste; he will not be frantic and nervous. But there are great inequalities of disposition, and while victory in these inner battles is very easy for those who are *bien né*, it is a life and death struggle for others not so favored. Robert Collyer was quite right when he said: "The amount of grace that would make a saint out of John, wouldn't keep Peter from knocking a man down!"

One used to see in the little shops along the streets of Damascus the expert makers of amber beads at work at their trade of polishing the beads. These experts gave each bead a few rubs and then laid the bead down to rest. If they had prolonged the rubbing beyond a certain point the bead would have burst into fragments from the inner strain due to the friction on the amber. We are something like that in our delicate structure. In the midst of our rush and hurry of today, with our frictions and fever heats, we need the calming hand upon us, and for that purpose we must have times of hush and quiet so that the calm may settle upon us, and "the uninterrupted news" come to us.

Drop Thy still dews of quietness  
Till all our strivings cease.  
Take from our souls the strain and stress  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of Thy peace.

It will not, however, do to stop on this note of quietness, on this pause of *selah*. For, after all, we rest only to fight better after the pause is over. We cannot be satisfied with the progress of the soul if its only jewels are radiance and serenity and patience. For Aristotle the virtuous soul was the magnanimous soul. I would like to add to that the quality of tenderness, gentleness, wistfulness, buoyancy,

humor, and finally endurance and integrity, which means wholeness—a near neighbor to holiness.

## III

*When the Day Dawn Comes*

In a little tract for the times, which were bad times, a tract known to us as the Second Epistle of Peter, the writer is looking forward with hope for the Day Dawn and for the Day Star to rise.<sup>1</sup> It is generally conceded by those who know that this Second Epistle of Peter is one of the very latest books of the New Testament to be written, perhaps as late as the middle of the second century. A number of books appeared about this time attributed to St. Peter—the Gospel of Peter, the Apocalypse of Peter, and this Epistle, which is the only one of the three books that was admitted to the Canon. It is not in the proper sense of the word an Epistle. It is rather a sermon, written out and circulated as a tract for dark times, when men were anxiously waiting for a Dawn.

The Fathers, the tract says, are all “fallen asleep,” which means that the original Apostles and Founders are all dead. The mockers are saying: “What now is the hope of His coming?” Everything goes on with no sign that God is doing anything. That is always one of the hardest things to bear in these times of darkness. And “the world is full of errors, heresies and false teaching,” which was certainly a fact in that second century. As you read this ancient tract, with its realism and its account of “the corruption of the world through lust,” you are likely to conclude that the writer was a pessimist, who sees everything through dark glasses. Anyone who wants to make a list of the things that

<sup>1</sup> II Peter I:19.

are wrong with the world, in any period of history, can make a whopping list.

No, this writer, in spite of his list, is not a pessimist. And he is just as certainly not an optimist. He sees the situation as it actually is—neither all black nor all rosy. He does not fall into Charybdis while he is trying to avoid Scylla. He knows that the world is in the agony of birth-travail, and births are always painful. "When a woman is in travail," Jesus said, "she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more her anguish for the joy that a man is born into the world."

The one hope this man has in his dark period is that God is still alive. It is the one hope in any period. God, for him, as for us, is the main Actor in the Drama—and there are signs of a Dawn. The moment you get rid of your paganism and your materialism and your scepticism, and your comfortable ease, and arrive at the certainty of Christ's God, living and at work in the world, you can begin to talk of a Dawn.

But where is the Dawn to be—the Day-Spring from on high? It will eventually, we hope, be on the map of the world, on the far-flung horizon where Dawn comes, but first of all it must come as a re-birth of the human spirit. A Dawn outside is no good unless it can be met with a Dawn inside. "We have," this writer says, "the word of prophecy made more sure." It is perhaps the promise that "the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing rays." We have that word made more sure, he goes on to say, "as a Light now shining in the darkness, until the Day-Dawn and the Day-Star rise *in your hearts*." That is where all spiritual births begin. This coming of Day-Dawn and the Day-Star in man's heart is no far-off divine event; it is the supreme event of here and now and raises life to its true dignity. It

is what the ancient world meant by being "reborn into eternity." For our writer it is "becoming a partaker of the divine nature." It comes by discovering and drawing upon the Eternal Resources that have always been there, as we have learned how to do with electricity.

They might have had electricity in the Garden of Eden if they had only discovered it. It was there all the time. "We had letters to send," Emerson wrote, "and the couriers could not go fast enough or far enough, but we found that the air and the earth were full of mysterious energies, *all going our way*. We hitched our wagon to a star. If we will only choose our jobs in the direction in which the heavenly powers travel, they will undertake them for us with the greatest pleasure." We have completely changed our world by the breaking in of electricity. We do not create or make it; we let it break through; it was always there, "going our way." We learned how to let it break through and do our work.

The breaking in of God into humanity is always the supreme event. The moment we touch life at its Source the major problems of life are on the way to solution. We begin to *live*. We turn sunsets to sunrises. We change the terminus into a thoroughfare. We live no longer wheezing and gasping, but at the top of our powers.

Strangely enough this man in his dark time, with his dull world around him, is not gazing backward to an event of the past; he is looking forward to a new Dawn—a new Day-Star, an Aurora that is to rise in man's soul. Socrates, who belongs among the prophets, always claimed that God had sent him to be the midwife of souls. It was his mission to help persons in spiritual travail to bring forth to birth their fresh ideas, their hopes and expectations. It is, I think, the highest mission of religion to produce in us this Day-Dawn and



Day-Star experience in the soul. This has always been one of my favorite texts in the whole Bible, and it is the very center of our Quaker faith—that the divine is revealed in man.

## CHAPTER II

### AUTHENTIC TIDINGS

#### I

#### *The Lord's Candle*

There is a great passage in the Book of Ecclesiasticus.<sup>1</sup> "A man's soul is sometimes wont to bring him tidings more than seven watchmen that sit high up in a watchtower." If the soul does bring authentic tidings, that is a very important fact. What we shall be thinking about in this essay is the divine possibility of human nature. I am very familiar with the evil in man. You do not need to go far to find it. I know how many villains there have been in history and how wicked masses of men often are. But I still believe with this inspired man in the divine possibility of the soul, that it can bring more authentic tidings than the newspapers.

This book, often called the Wisdom of Sirach, is a very great book and belongs among the books of Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew people, written during the period of Greek influence and culture. This man who wrote it loved the beauty of nature—always a good sign—the starry heavens, the rainbow, sunsets, the clouds, flowers and birds, but above everything else he loved Wisdom, which lies open to a man's soul. The greatness of the book lies in its exaltation of the inherent capacity of the human soul. The soul brings authentic tidings, for God and man are closely allied. A man is nearest to God when he is most completely a person.

<sup>1</sup> XXXVII:14.

This ancient wise man insists that a man's daily work on the farm, in the shop, in the study, can be *sacramental*, the practice of one's trade can be a prayer and it can support the fabric of the world. "The handiwork of men's craft is their prayer," he says, "and they maintain the fabric of the world."

But what I am eager to underscore in this forgotten book is its lofty conception of the soul. The word *soul* here includes the entire inner self of man, as it always did for the Greek—Intellect, Imagination, Emotion and Will. Man's unique soul has come out of the Deep from the Eternal Reality of the universe, and is an *effulgence* of that Reality, and so it *can have* tidings of it.

This lofty conception of man, which we have unfortunately largely lost, runs through all the Wisdom Literature of our Bible, and is its inheritance from the great Greek tradition. The noblest instance of it is found in the Book of Proverbs: "The spirit of man is a candle of the Lord." <sup>2</sup>

This phrase is a spiritual fragment of human experience of a deeper level than most of the words of the book in which it is found. It is like a piece of floating star dust, caught and preserved in the amber of this book of practical wisdom and everyday common sense. Only the profoundest of prophetic souls could have discovered this truth and have uttered it with such extraordinary simplicity. It is the very heart of Christian Platonism in all the ages, and it has been a favorite text of spiritual prophets all down through the centuries.

It means that there is something in man's inmost being that can be struck into flame by God, and as we feed the flame with our lives we can become a revealing place for God, a luminous flame of light and love. If that is true it

<sup>2</sup> Prov. XX:27.

is one of the greatest words ever spoken. It puts the basis of religion at the center of our human life where it belongs—an inside authority, not an outside authority. Religion on this view is not an addendum to life, not a remedial scheme added to a spiritually barren and bankrupt being. Religion is not a foreign bestowal; it is a divine spring and capacity which belongs to our being as persons. Religion is just overbrimming, abounding life, an unexpected surplus. It is what the Twenty-third Psalm is saying, that when God anoints the life the cup overflows and, as the colored woman put it in her testimony, “and my saucer too!”

The process of salvation is not away from normality; it is rather the attainment of complete normal spiritual health. It is the discovery of the Alpine sources of life and power. What needs to be underscored in this connection is the fact that religion, if it is to be real and vital, must be the expression of the *whole man*. Josiah Royce used to say that an animal, a dog for instance, is a tiny fraction of a person. Yes, but so, too, are a great many bipeds with high foreheads and broad flat nails. When André Chénier, the poet of the French Revolution, was brought to the guillotine to be executed, he climbed the steps with his hands bound behind him, and touching the frame of the guillotine with his head, he said: “It’s too bad to take off that head of mine; there’s something in it that hasn’t come out yet.”

Nobody has ever found the whole of himself until he has found the hole in the sky and feels himself in mutual and reciprocal correspondence with the More, the Beyond that would complete him.

A youth going up to Cambridge recently as a freshman had what he calls “an eternal moment,” when he felt “the stillness which lies at the heart of life’s movement.” “This

peace," he says, "that passeth understanding," this joy that was "like a tide of music flowing with calm compulsion and from an infinite source through my whole being, was the Reality at the heart of life."

You do not get at this *More* which completes your life by artful arguing or by clever ratiocination. It is a matter of discovery, like that of Columbus. You trust your native intuitions, you set yourself into parallelism with divine currents and sail out beyond your old terminus, your intellectual Pillars of Hercules, and find yourself in contact with your *Mother Sea*. Sailing in the Southern Seas one night I was sitting on the deck looking at the Southern Cross when a flying fish outdid himself and leaped over the rail of the ship, landing near where I was sitting. I picked up the frightened fish, felt his heart beat in my hand, and dropped him back into his element. He knew exactly what to do when he got where he belonged. The moment you find the whole of yourself, the reach of your spirit has found and touched the divine, and you are where you belong.

John Magee whose brilliant life as pilot and poet came all too soon to an end, wrote in his great sonnet, "Sunward I've Climbed":

With silent, lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

But it isn't done by flying or climbing, or going somewhere. It is done by opening the doors of your life to the Beyond that is within. It is discovering your own *specific levity* which puts you on the new level where you meet the tides of the Spirit, and there comes an influx of the Divine into the human, as the tide comes in at Fundy. Emerson used to say that if you hold a straw parallel to the Gulf Stream the

ocean will flow through the straw. It is true also that the moment a life comes into parallelism with celestial currents, the Divine will flow through it. The deep saith that it is not in me, and the sea saith it is not with me. No, it is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart.

Religion is not asceticism, not shrinkage. It is abundant life; it is a skyward lift, life to the full. Religion, that is real, liberates, enlarges, infuses the whole of life with joy and vigor. It brings with it spiritual fecundity. G. K. Chesterton said: "Let your religion be less a theory and more a love affair." But I do not for a moment mean to imply that I expect God to achieve the moral victories of the world while we calmly enjoy our mystical holiday of the soul. No, every true glimpse of God, every gleam of light that comes to us only makes moral wrong so much more unbearable, and sends us forth with new energies to right the wrong and re-make the world. There are times that call for greatness of soul. This is one of those times. There is no place now for persons with "the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin."

They see not God, I know,  
Nor all that chivalry of His,  
The soldier-saints who, row on row,  
Burn upward, each to his point of bliss—  
Since the end of life being manifest,  
He burned his way through the world to this.

## II

*Come Back to the Tree of Life*

"I saw the Holy City coming down from God out of heaven, and I heard a voice saying 'God dwells with men.'

"In the middle of the City was the river of the water of

Life and on both sides of the River was the Tree of Life and the leaves are for the healing of the Nations."

The Book of Revelation is a vivid drama of the world-old struggle between Light and darkness, Good and evil, Life and death, the Lamb and the beast. The refrain of the Book is: the Lamb is making war with the beast. It was written at the time of immense crisis. There had been a series of bad emperors who had let loose their fury on the new Christian movement. You have the early story told in the famous novel, *The Robe*. But it was the Emperor Domitian in the year 95 who set about the task of annihilating the Christian Church in its cradle stage. That tremendous event is the background of this Book. There is much in the Book that remains mysterious. To circulate at all some things had to be in a hidden cipher and in a parable form which only the initiated would understand. What stands out as plain as sunrise is the fact that *the nations of the world need healing*. And this man finds the healing in the leaves of *the Tree of Life* and in the waters of the River of Life which flows out of the Life of God.

The earth is pretty well supplied with trees and shrubs and plants for healing the ills of individuals. It used to be one of my duties in the autumn to collect the supply of these things for our winter diseases: Balm of Gilead buds, Thoroughwort, Boneset, Penny-royal, Catnip, Heal-all, Mullein. What we didn't have and didn't need was the shrub from which quinine is made for malaria and we had no Eucalyptus trees. Earth has a specific for almost all of man's ills. But healing the nations is a much more difficult business, and there is no physician quite great enough for this job.

I suppose none of us has any doubt that the nations of the world, at least most of them, need healing. They are all

sick. They are all afflicted with deep-seated maladies. They have all, as Jeremiah would say, received hurt which no balm in Gilead can heal. No quick panacea will do now for the illness which afflicts the nations of the world.

Some of the nations no doubt are sicker than others are. But there is no sound normal health anywhere in what we now call the global area. For a long time some of the nations have been suffering from a malady of the mind. It would take a wiser man than Thucydides or Gibbon to diagnose the trouble. The roots of it lie very deep and like all processes of infection, the causes are too subtle for quick detection and analysis. I have read many accounts of the sources of the poison, but they are all inadequate. If it hadn't been for Hegel's philosophy, for Nietzsche, for Wagner's operas, if it hadn't been for the type of Peace Treaty—all would have been well. No, that's very superficial diagnosis. We can all repeat the words, "Thou ailest *here* and *here*." But why has the disease become so acute in this particular year of grace? We name certain names as the monstrous signs of the trouble, but if these persons were suddenly eliminated the illness which infects the life of nations would not forthwith disappear.

This strange man on the Island of Patmos has, I believe, put his finger on the right medicine for the ultimate healing of the illness. He says it is the recovery of *the Tree of Life*. The Bible opens with an account of how the Tree of Life was lost, and it closes with an account of the recovery of that Tree of Life, the leaves of which will heal the nations. According to that great epic account in Genesis, the Tree of Life was lost because the Tree of Knowledge was prized and preferred above it. It is always a disaster when abstract *theory* usurps the place of life. When men live by rationalizations instead of the springs and sources of life



itself, when "ideologies" take the place of first-hand experiences of life itself. A book about mother-love is a poor substitute for a mother when you want to bring up a child! This swamping of life by theories and ideologies has happened many times in the history of the race. Luther in his first intention was endeavoring to come back from the apples of the tree of gray theory to the real Tree of Life, and that is the substance of George Fox's mission—to get away from what he called "notions," i. e., ideologies, to the realities which grow only on the Tree of Life. "I knew God," he says, "experimentally." "I had the key that doth open." "I came up through the flaming sword into the Paradise of God and was in the condition of Adam before he fell"—and so had access to the Tree of Life.

Well, we have been over-fertilizing this tree of theoretical knowledge. The youth of the world have fed too long on the colicky green fruits of this tree loaded with theories and ideologies. They no longer hear the Lord God walking and talking with them in the cool of the day. He is absent from their world which is reduced to describable particles. In that kind of world there is nowhere to go for the refreshment of the soul. You are in a world where spirits of our type do not belong. If we had a world free from want and free from fear, we should still not be free from the oppression of frustration and we should still have bad dreams of futility. There is no healing, there is no balm until we recover the Tree of Life, until we come back to the Fountain-head of life and health and re-enter the living stream of the Water of Life.

We have too often assumed that this Tree of Life is in some heavenly Paradise, to be reached only after death. But this city with its River of Life and its Tree of Life is a city, a nation down here on earth, not in the sky. It has come

down from God out of heaven and God dwells with men and that is what makes the city a heavenly city. Every city would be like that if the nations were healed with the River of Life, and the Tree of Life and the light and love of God were in them. You cannot live and be in a state of health on notions and ideologies. There is no healing until we come back to the vitamins of the eternal igdrasil tree, the Tree of Life.

## III

*In God We Live*

This is one of the most august sayings, and one of the most impressive truths about our kind of life that anybody has ever uttered. St. Paul was on his second missionary journey. He had been minded to evangelize Bithynia on the shores of the Black Sea, but he was fortunately baffled in his plans for an eastern mission, and turned his face west, not knowing quite where he was eventually going. Cromwell said once, "A man never goes so far as when he doesn't know where he is going." And surely this was one of the most momentous goings forth in uncertainty in the history of the race. Coming down to Troas, still unsettled in his direction, he suddenly saw his track. It was in the reverse of Alexander's, who had gone out from Philippi of Macedonia to Troas. St. Paul goes now with clear leading, from Troas to Philippi, which was soon to become "a Colony of Heaven," and plants Christianity in Europe, west of the Bosphorus.

By a strange course of events, marked by successes and failures, he found himself, according to Acts, standing on the Areopagus, a stone's throw from the traditional prison of Socrates, looking across to the Acropolis, where the mar-

vellous creations of Phidias' skill were visible. It was there, in that setting, with a group of half-philosophers listening to him, that this inspired apostolic man said: "In God we live and move and are." Nothing is more important in the history of our race than the discovery (which may more properly be called a revelation) that God is an envioning and ever-present Spirit.

This discovery is much older than the discovery of any scientifically verified law of nature. We are apt to suppose that scientific conclusions are more permanent and unvarying than religious insights, but just the opposite is the case. For the last twenty-five hundred years almost every scientific conclusion has undergone change, including Newton's formulation of the law of gravitation which seemed final. The scientific scrap-heap is one of the biggest scrap-heaps in the world. But great religious principles, once discovered and verified in universal human experience, have remained unshaken through the centuries, as great creations in art and music and poetry have taken an established place as the classics of the race, which all the parvenus, with their modernism and futurism, cannot displace.

This conception of God as Spirit is one of the most permanent truths in the spiritual treasury of the race. It was only slowly won and it was the joint creative spiritual attainment of the Greek and Hebrew peoples. In both these countries God for many centuries was thought of as an enlarged manlike being, who lived on the top of Olympus, or Sinai, or in the sky-dome, and who on occasion visited the earth to look after affairs, or sent angels or other winged messengers, to do it for Him. He walked in the Garden of Eden "in the cool of the day." He came down on the Plains of Shinar to see what those foolish men were doing with their bricks and their high tower. He helped the Hebrew

tribes to drive out the inhabitants of the hill country, but they were unable together to drive out the valley people because they—probably Philistines—had iron chariots!

Plato is the first person to interpret, clearly and definitely, a God who is a World Soul, or Eternal World Mind, though he had important forerunners. Plato opposed all forms of materialism and mechanism, and he thought of the ultimate Reality of the universe as spiritual. The great Hebrew prophets after the Exile were moving in the same direction. But it is in the Wisdom Literature, which was written after Greek influence had penetrated life and thought in Palestine, and when there was a fusion of the Greek and Hebrew strands, that the thought of God as Spirit comes into clear expression. It is most clearly expressed in the 139th Psalm, "Whither shall I go from Thy Presence or flee from Thy Spirit?" And the answer is that there is no place in the universe to which one can fly or sail or migrate where the Spirit will not be already present. There are great passages in Proverbs, in Job, and in the late Priestly sections of the Old Testament, where God is no longer thought of as a great manlike being, but is operative, pervasive Spirit.

But it is St. Paul, the greatest of the prophets and the first of the apostles, and after him St. John, who have given us the clearest and most unmistakable thought of God as the Spirit in whom we live, and Who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, i. e., with a sense of reality.

This conception of God is interpreted at its highest and noblest form in St. John's account of the teaching of Jesus at Jacob's well in Samaria. In this revealing message God is declared to be essentially Spirit and therefore a Being Who can be worshipped truly only when the worship is a spiritual act and attitude. This conception had already been interpreted in a very lofty way in St. Paul's "Aegean

Gospel," which, for me, reaches its height in chapters three, four and five of Second Corinthians. The poets have caught up the great truth and sent it in winged words over the world, until it has become part of the necessary air we breathe. But I still like best to go back to Mars Hill, and there in the dim twilight, with the glow still on Mount Hy-mettus, to read the words of the ancient sermon: "In God we live and move and have our being."

### CHAPTER III

## THE ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LIFE

#### I

#### *Entering into Life*

There is a remarkable recurrent phrase in the Gospels about entering into life. It is for Christ the master secret, the essential aspect, of existence here on earth. There are moments

When the spirit's true endowments  
Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
And apprise it if pursuing  
Or the right way or the wrong way,  
To its triumph or undoing.

What I want to emphasize here is the supreme importance of discovering this secret of life—the eternal significance of it—not in terms of theory, but in terms of actual living. Archbishop Cranmer, in his felicitous Preface to the *Great Bible*, said: "All our holiness consisteth in talking, and we pardon each other from all good living so that we may stick fast together in argumentation." A good argument is a very different thing from a good life, and it is so easy and apparently "natural" to substitute the one for the other.

We are familiar with two ways of dealing with the nature of things: (1) the method of observation and exact description from the outside, the spectator method, and (2) the method of vital experience—discovery of reality by living your way into the heart of things. The first way is "knowl-

edge about" and the second way is "knowledge of acquaintance." You can ask the porter on the train to bring your hat which you forthwith describe in terms of location, size, shape and style. You help him to get a sufficient amount of knowledge about the hat. What you cannot possibly give him by any amount of description is the *feel of the hat* when you put it on your own head. *That* is forever knowledge of acquaintance and it cannot be transmitted into knowledge about. Mother love is something quite different from, worlds asunder from, a book about mother love, just as the botanist's flower in the crannied wall is utterly different from the poet's flower. There is no doubt a place for both of these approaches, only one of them is apt to rise to such importance that it eclipses the other way of approach.

At the present time the first method has pretty much captured the field. It has steadily, since the time of Descartes and Newton, become more and more exact and mathematical, since perfectly exact description can be attained only in terms of mathematics. The conclusions of the scientific laboratories become more and more unescapable, but at the same time ever more abstract, universal and *remote* from our warm and throbbing concrete life, with its aspirations, its hopes and faiths, its sense of free creative action, remote, too, from confidence in the reality of the values of life, by which we live, in so far as we truly *live*.

The result of all this has been a widespread sense of frustration and inner defeat. The more one knows in terms of exact description, too often the less is the feel of the reality of the significance of life. The doors of life seem to shut to. The windows of the soul suffer "black-outs." There are no goal-posts for the thrilling game of life. The process of description, ruthlessly carried through, entails reduction and the stripping away of everything that will

not submit to description and explanation. We end, therefore, with a reduced world, a reduced man, and greatly reduced hopes and aims and aspirations. We are like the centipede which was happy in its stride and in the manipulation of its many legs until it started reflecting about which leg came after which. This reduced her mind to such a pitch,

She lay distracted in the ditch  
Considering how to run.

It is an apt parable of our present frustrations due to the endeavor to manage life by abstract "knowledge about," when one can *live* only through knowledge of acquaintance.

But the method of science (which of course in its proper area is a sound method) has been so successful that for many persons it has absorbed the whole field. Descartes and Hobbes and the scientist who swept the sky with his telescope and found no God—no realm of creative Spirit—and the recent physiologist who "swept" the brain with his microscope and found no mind, have won.

And *that*, I think, lies at the heart of our world tragedy. There is nothing to shake our consciousness with thoughts "beyond the reaches of our souls." If life has no ultimate scope, no intrinsic meaning, no free purpose; if only *things* matter, let us have a Leviathan, a Fuehrer, a totalitarian Director to manage our affairs and enable us to conjugate the verb to eat successfully. Many persons at the present time see no other practical solution in a world reduced to basic material elements, and one of the reactions has been an escape into an attitude of "unreason," but that is only another type of frustration.

The only solution of this *impasse* is, certainly not to give up the scientific method, but to bring up in proper balance



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the true, rich, rounded appreciation of life itself, with its own sure springs and sources of direct experience. Here there comes into operation a world of infinite scope which "lends a *yonder* to all ends."

Kant always held that man's reason demands the unconditioned, the infinite and absolute, in every one of its spheres of operation—in the realm of knowledge, the realm of morals, and in the realm of values. There can be no *real explanation* of anything until the mind goes beyond the limits of what the "understanding" describes. And how can we go beyond those limits? We go beyond those limits whenever we trust our own inner vital personal experience.

So nigh is grandeur to our dust  
So near is God to man,  
When duty whispers low, "Thou must,"  
The youth replies, "I can."

As soon as we live our way into the heart of the realities we need for creative life, the sense of frustration is over and there is a hole in the sky and free water to swim in. Nobody in the thrill of action has any doubt about freedom. And nobody who has truly fallen in love has any doubt of the intrinsic value, the infinite value, of love. It is its own evidence, its own excuse for being.

Is there nothing then but love, search we sky and earth?  
There is nothing out of love hath perpetual worth.

What is true of love is just as true of God and the world of spiritual realities. There come high moments when we find ourselves where we know we *belong*, when the Beyond is here and the Yonder is present. These eternal moments take the soul to the very heart of reality. Many times I have found my way home in the dark because my feet felt the

road when my eyes could not see it. There is Something in us, deeper than hands or feet, that finds the way to the Central Reality, and when we arrive we know it.

The goal of life is not a code or a law or a fixed creed—it is a flying goal, with an ever new Beyond. "You are to be perfect," Christ said, "as your Father in Heaven is perfect." "This is Life Eternal," the Christ of John's Gospel said, "to be on the way toward knowing Thee, the only real God." And St. Paul, after admitting that he had not yet attained and was not yet perfect, said, "This one thing I do, leaving every previous achievement, I press on toward the goal for the prize of my high calling; and let as many as are 'perfect' be thus minded."

## II

*The Strait Gate and the Narrow Way*

If you expect to "enter into life" you must take the business very seriously. You must strive to enter—the word Christ uses can best be rendered: "you must *agonize*" to make this entrance into life, you must experience birth pangs. The gate is strait, the way is narrow, and "strait" here does not mean the opposite of crooked, it means the opposite of "broad." It is not a popular highway; it is a narrow, lonely, unfrequented trail.

It is profoundly true that all supremely important achievements are difficult. You do not arrive by escalator or aeroplane. You agonize and climb to the top. A lady watching Holman Hunt draw perfect free-hand circles asked him how she could learn to do it. "You must practice eight hours a day," he said, "for forty years and then it is just as easy as *this*"; and in illustration his hand drew a circle as perfect as though made with compass. You cannot

drift into any great or perfect attainment. We ought to expect that this highest experience that life knows anything about—the soul's life with God—would call for our best powers and our keenest efforts. You must knock, Jesus said, you must besiege the door and it will open, however tight it seems shut. Christ does not talk about open doors or wide-swinging gates.

It ought not to surprise us that the way into the spiritual life is narrow, for we came into this physical world over a very narrow bridge. The way of birth into this world is unbelievably strait and marvellously narrow. We owe our chance at life to the development of a single cell of protoplasm. That is the invisible, microscopic bridge over which we came out of the everywhere into the here. And over that strait and narrow bridge we have brought all our inheritances from the past, our instincts, our fundamental emotions, our primitive tendencies, the color of eyes, the shape of nose, and a thousand traits of life. How strait is the bridge over which we brought this important luggage!

From our first arrival the limits of life are strait and narrow—the cradle, the basket, the crib, the high chair, and the little area of creeping. We are shut in narrow and cramping bounds which remind one of Hamlet's confinement in a nut-shell, when he wanted to be king of infinite space. One of the Psalmists tells us that he was "hemmed in." Yes, we all are "hemmed in." If you were ever "lost" in the woods or in a fog or on a great lake, or wedged in where you couldn't crawl out, or where the way closed up and left no egress, you know what it is to be "hemmed in." Someone asked Daniel Boone once whether he had ever been "lost." "No," he said, "I never got lost, but I was bewildered once for three days."

You cannot have ancestors and not get from them some

traits that are narrowing, confining and unfortunate. There is an iron law of heredity which at some point binds us all. With the good things they gave us our forebears also gave us some heavy handicaps. They gave us some strait bounds. What settled for us the place and time of birth? Why here rather than in Greece in the age of Pericles? Why this parent rather than another one? Why here rather than somewhere else on the latitude and longitude of the globe?

I was born in a home of meager visible resources. I was set in severe limits. Most doors of life were shut. I was never in a railroad train until I was almost seventeen. I was never until then farther away from home than twenty miles. I had never seen a city larger than Augusta and that usually from a load of pressed hay or of potatoes. My early education had marks of narrow limitation. Why was I not taught to know the birds and the wild flowers and the marvels of nature that surrounded me?

Well, as everybody knows who knows me, if I were choosing a place to be born in again I would choose this very place where I was born the first time, and I should choose the hard limits and restrictions to any birth conditions of ease and comfort. No, it is not the strait and narrow limits that spoil life and bring frustrations.

Jesus is divinely right when He makes the way into this highest type of life strait, narrow and stern. You cannot expect to enjoy a rich, free spiritual life if you do not accept the conditions of it. Every game you play must be played within the limits of a definite pattern. The fascination of the game is the ability to do great things in the stern limits of the pattern. If you step three inches over the side line boundary with the foot-ball you have lost your chance to make a touch-down. If you are "off-side" the least fraction when the ball is put into play, that play is spoiled. Not a

move, not a single run can be made which does not conform to the stern pattern of the game. How strikingly true this is in the game of checkers or of chess. Each type of "chess-man" has its own peculiar "move" and you are absolutely tied to that pattern.

The sonnet in poetry is one of the greatest forms of poetry but it has the gravest limits. You may have only one theme in a sonnet and you may use only fourteen lines, with a specific system of rhymes, in developing it. To say that "the world is too much with us," and to say it greatly in those limits is an immortal achievement. To turn the stern rocky Mont St. Michel into the glory of its spires and pinnacles is a feat never to be forgotten. Manhattan Island is a limited area originally valued at about twenty-six dollars, but its city sky-line has become the most remarkable one in the world. Our business is not to run away and find relief in some romantic dream, but to make this narrow way and this strait gate of life a thing of beauty and a way of glory.

Religion of this entering-into-life type has two great missions to perform for us. It enables us to live triumphantly in our hard limits, and it gives the fortification we need to take up the task of rebuilding our world on the diviner pattern that we see from the mount of vision. Religion of the genuine sort brings serenity to troubled souls and a peace which passes comprehension in the midst of hard conditions and severe limitations.

But this vision of relief is not enough. One of the most obvious weaknesses of Christians has been the lull of contentment which comes with peace and serenity. Too often, like the knight of the Grail, Christians who have attained calm and serenity,

Leaving human wrongs to right themselves  
Wished but to pass into the quiet life.

But the main business of religion is not finding an escape. Religion of the great sort, religion which discovers that God is the environment of the soul, always calls to a task, it sets about creating a new social order here on the rock-bound coast of time. We are to build a new sky-line here in these narrow limits. Even those hard conditions of heredity and environment can be transformed by a power from within. How did old Pietro Bernadone and his French wife ever produce such a wonderful son as St. Francis of Assisi? Well, they did not "produce" him. That amazing youth tapped divine resources and became the organ of a new environment. It is possible to build a new sky-line on the sternest base; it is possible to erect a cathedral on the tiny island which has fallen to your lot. What makes all the difference is the breaking in on the soul of a greater environment than the one our eyes see. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says of Moses, what we may say of anybody today, "seeing Him Who is invisible he never flinched."

## III

*The Gold of Ophir for a Man*

In a great crisis of human history—and "crisis" means both danger and opportunity—Isaiah, the prophet-statesman of those critical times, gave a vivid description of the function of the rightly fashioned man who comes to meet the severe issue. "A man," he says, "shall be as a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shelter of a great rock in a desert land."<sup>1</sup>

All types of things were needed then, but the loudest cry was for a *man*, as it is in every crisis. When James Russell

<sup>1</sup> Isa. XXXII:2.

Lowell wrote *Biglow Papers* during the American Civil War, everybody was crying for "more men." He, on the other hand, called for "more *man*," for

One that felt all chief  
From roots of hair to sole o'stockin',  
Square-sot, with thousand-ton belief  
In him an' us, if Earth went rockin'.

What the great prophet in Jerusalem is saying in his crisis is that the central fountain force of a sound and stable society is not primarily its material wealth, not even the things it produces, though these must certainly not be discounted in importance, but the creative strength and freshness of human personality—the vigor, faith, insight, and solid character of its manhood. Carlyle may be a back number, but he was talking sense when he said: "The history of what has been accomplished in the world is at the bottom the story of the great men who have worked there."

We are bound in this crisis—our crisis—to talk about forces, equipment, material strength, physical prowess, national resources and alliances, but woe unto us if we forget to insist on the absolute importance, on the gospel, of the individual person, with his inherent strength of character and his dynamic leadership.

The prophet uses a striking figure to envisage the mission and service of the man who is essential in a great crisis. He has just been describing the collapse of Assyria and he ascribes this débâcle to the fact that they had no *man* for this crisis. "A man there," he says, "was as rare as the gold of Ophir, as a wedge of gold." It is in contrast to that lack for their crisis that he describes the function of the rock-man needed for the crisis of his nation.

This man who is wanted will be like a great rock in a desert land. The desert is as much a feature of the life in

Palestine as the sea is to the life of England. It is bounded on the south and on the east by desert. And the most striking thing about the desert is the ceaseless drift of the sand before the pitiless wind. Nothing therefore is more important than to find something that will break the drift.

As one goes down from rocky Judea, which looks as though it had been stoned for its sins, he comes to the marvellously fertile plains of Sharon. Then one comes to Gaza, Samson's Gaza—at the edge of the desert. It has been the scene of many battles of the world's greatest captains, Sennacherib, Alexander, Saladin, Napoleon, and Allenby. But a fierce battle is going on there every day—the battle with the drift of the desert. You may wake up any morning and find that a foot of sand has buried your garden, or invaded your orange orchard. The problem here is to break the drift of the desert sand. A great rock or a stream of water will do it best. And here lies the prophet's philosophy of history. A man for the time serves his generation, serves his race, by arresting the drift. He stands like a rock against outworn customs, foolish habits of thought, miserable ideologies, drifts of materialism and inane theories of life, which go on because no one is wise enough or heroic enough to break the drift. We have seen whole nations swamped by an ill-considered drift, as irrational as a sand-storm in Sahara, with no rock-man to break the drift, and to make it possible for beauty, truth, goodness and pure love to flourish in the lee of the shelter of the drift-breaker.

Abraham broke the universal drift of long ages of idolatry and superstition, and started men lifting their faces to an unseen God and reshaped the current of history. "And God," as a great New Testament writer said, "was not ashamed to be called 'the God of Abraham.'" Socrates, in the welter of doubt and denial which the Sophists were



spreading like a sand-drift over Greece, stood out as a rock in the desert and changed the current of thought for all time to come, and through the influence of his great disciple, Plato, made a new intellectual world possible. This movement, initiated by the divinely guided Socrates, marks in the Western world the birth in consciousness of God inwardly revealed as Spirit in mutual correspondence with man's spirit. Christ, dying on a Roman cross for the Truth He would not surrender, has been and still is the greatest breaker of the drift of sin and worldliness the ages have seen. And God, for all of us since that event, is the God of love and grace, the Father-God of Jesus Christ. The key to that Life, the essential secret of it, is revealed for us in a precious story out of His hidden years of youth, which tells how when twelve years old He had discovered that His mission, the aim and purpose of His life, was to be about His Father's business, busy with the affairs of God. It may be done in the Temple; it may be done in a carpenter shop; it may be done in a fishing village; it may be done on a Roman Cross. No matter what the vocation may be the avocation can well be promoting the Father's business.

Wherever any of us, young or old, take up this mission of being about our Father's business, of being to God what a man's hand is to the man, we become in some sense the rock that breaks the drift, and a covert from the tempest and a stream of water in a dry and thirsty land. I have been speaking as though it were the great man, the epoch-making man this text was playing up. Well, of course, the greater the better. But after all it is the common man that counts most, for the world rests on the shoulders of the common man in the last resort. The country doctor who goes out in the storm and the night and through the snow to save the life of a child he has never seen before is about his Father's

business. So, too, is the sweeper of the city street, the white angel, who works in the infected dust of the street to make it safe for the children who have no other play-ground but the street. The lonely light-house keeper on the solitary rock, with little to think about but his plain duty to make his light guide the ship with its human freight safely to land, is doing his Father's business. So, too, is the mother who is guiding little children and nurturing little minds in the things that make life, for of such is God's Kingdom. The toiler in any field may make life a ministry as sacred as that of the priest at the altar and may in his daily round be doing his Father's business.

When everybody was rushing frantically about, with their quick panaceas for the crisis, this same prophet Isaiah was saying: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," and then he insists that it will be a man who can stand like a rock and break the drift that will save the nation. What I am saying, who am no prophet, is that while the great man who can shift the current of the ages is important in a great crisis, it is after all simple humble souls like us who in quietness and confidence go about our everyday duties with fortitude and high purpose that do our Father's business for Him, and in our measure stop the drift and bring the water of refreshment to lives that are thirsty—and so "urge men's minds to vaster issues."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HEIGHT OF LIFE

#### I

#### *"He Babbled of Green Fields"*

There are very few perfect creations in the world. The Parthenon, the Taj Mahal, Chartres Cathedral, Raphael's Sistine Madonna may suggest a possible list.

There is a short simple Psalm—the twenty-third, written by an ancient Palestine shepherd in shepherd's pictorial language, which through the centuries has impressed almost all types of minds as a picture of life that belongs in the list of perfect creations. If the test of universal appreciation is a sound criterion, then this Psalm would go well to the top of the list. Nothing else that was ever written has been known by heart by as many persons as has this Psalm. Every Jewish child can recite it. It is familiar to all well-nurtured Christian children. It is one of the finest treasures imparted to the children in all Mission stations in all lands on the globe. You may hear the barefoot children in Ceylon recite it. You can hear it in the igloos of the Eskimos. You can hear the children in Korea and in Patagonia saying it. Whether it is the most perfect creation or not, it is the best-loved poem ever written. The child recites it as his first achievement in learning by heart, and the veteran Christian finishes life lisping these beloved words of faith and confidence. It seems probable that this is what Shake-

speare's old Sir John Falstaff was trying to repeat at the end. "He died like any Christom child," Dame Quickly reports. "He said, 'God, God, God,' he plucked at the sheet, and then 'a babbled o' green fields,' " trying to say: "He leadeth me in green pastures."

What needs to be noted is the fact that the Psalm presents the three periods, the three stages of life through which we pass. It begins with the naïve, child-minded stage of life, when everything is provided, without care or worry or anxiety, or any sense that life is a difficult affair. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He leadeth me in green pastures and by level brooks." There is only one short period of life like that for any of us, when everything we need comes to us without any sense of the strain of providing, when we are surrounded by loving providers and the supplies come to meet the needs. Here is expressed a naïve faith, untested, untried, and with no experience of the dead strains with which all of us are so familiar, or of the knowledge that most things we want are very hard to arrive at.

Then comes the middle stage of life, which we all know so well—no longer level and easy-going. There are hills to climb, and dark deep valleys with frightening shadows to be passed through. The *Pilgrim* in Bunyan's story says: "Some have wished that the way to their Father's house were here, so that they might be troubled no more with either hills or mountains to go over, but the Way is the Way, and there is an end." We find ourselves, how often, ringed about with hostile difficulties, and only by slow and patient experience we discover step by step that our Shepherd-God is with us in the dark and shadowed valleys, and prepares, or at least helps us to find the food we need on the perilous steep. In the midst of the labor and struggle He anoints us with His oil of gladness and our cups—and our

saucers, too—overflow with more than enough, with a glad surplus for others.

This brings us to a third and wonderful stage. Through the struggle with the deeps and the heights, and the consciousness of Presence through it all, we acquire a new kind of faith, very different from that naïve faith at the beginning. It is now a faith, robust and virile, founded on experience, tested in the dark and on the mountain hillside, in the face of difficulties. We can look back on the guided journey—the rod and the staff, the table and the oil—and we can look forward with the assurance: “Surely goodness and mercy now shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.”

We can go back over these stages once more and see how the Psalm applies on a new level. Life begins with innocence, as this Psalm does. It is a beautiful stage of life. We love to see it in the child for we know that *we* have lost it, as Adam and Eve did, and we can never have it again, any more than they could get their lost Eden back. But innocence is not a virtue. It is “given,” not acquired. A great many things are innocent, baby tigers, infant Lucretia Borgia, and Napoleon in the cradle. Hitler was once a lovely, smiling innocent child, as sweet as any mother’s heart could wish. But moral virtues have all to be won. They must be achieved in the face of struggle and battle with difficulties and temptation. You are on the perilous edge once more, ringed about with problems, alternative choices, a right way and a wrong way. Once more you must discover your Guide, learn to bear the rod and the staff when the hard choice is being made. In any case every single virtue any one of us carries in his soul has been won through struggle and battle and choices, sometimes with the hot breath of the enemy in our faces.

Then comes the third calm stage of rightly formed and settled character which has come to birth through the battle with stern issues of life. We no longer find it necessary to halt and struggle over many of the appeals that were once temptation to us. They slide off and have no hold on us. They look absurd now. The character itself, fashioned and builded in the storms that are safely passed, settles the issues for us without debate. How could I, with this character of mine, do that low mean thing—no, the issues are settled and the forged anchors hold. We have banked the assets formed in the moral struggles of the past and they, with God, are for us forever.

But there is still another level through which life passes, with the three stages of our beloved Psalm. Life begins at the stage of *instinct*. This instinctive contrivance with which life begins, and with which the insect and animal continue, is a most amazing affair. Life at first could not go on at all without the instinctive processes with which the child comes furnished. But instinct has no foresight of results. It is a perfect adaptation of responses to given situations. The instinctive operation requires no thinking, no effort, and there are no alternatives. A mysterious push from the structure of the highly organized centers, with which the body is furnished, does the business in hand. There is no effort, no hard choice, no strain, no worry. All instinctive operations are easy, pleasurable and tireless. The bee and the ant do not “work,” nor does the bird building its nest, nor does the sucking child. It is another instance of “green pastures and still waters.”

But in the second stage of life every achievement of skill costs strain and effort and exhaustion. Nobody gets the alphabet by instinct. It must be learned. It is a supreme achievement for it is the key which unlocks all the treas-

ures of literature, but it costs effort. The conquest of the number system is another marvellous achievement, for this is an infinite trail—there is no last number! Watch a child learning to write. He bends over and watches the movements of his fingers and his whole muscle system is astrain. He is quickly tired with the effort. Knitting, sewing, walking, drawing, hoeing, chopping—in short every attainment of skill comes only at the cost of labor, pains, effort, muscle-strain and exhaustion.

Then comes a new stage, a third and wonderful stage of life which may be called “secondary instinct,” or subconscious processes. This is the stage of achieved skill, when one hits the mark of his aim with the sureness of instinct, but with the wisdom of slow and painful acquisition. We write without knowing how we do it. We knit without watching the hands. We play the intricate and complicated *opus* on the piano or the violin with swift movements which seem to come from beyond the steering processes of the mind. The perfect performer can never explain how he does it any more than the centipede can tell “which leg comes after which.” Thinking “how you do it” spoils the perfection of the process. But secondary instinct, unlike primary instinct, is always within hail of the mind, can be steered if it goes wrong, and is always capable of further improvement through practice and effort. But one can quietly fall back in confidence on acquired skill and say with the Psalmist, surely this gift from above shall be with me all the days of my life.

This perfect Psalm fits every stage and every level of life, and what I have been saying about the deep and hidden processes of life-formation are at least implied, if not explicitly expressed, in the beautiful Psalm of the ages.

## II

*Where the Wind Comes From*

One of the most interesting stories in the Gospel of St. John is the visit of Nicodemus by night. It is easy to understand why he came by night, and it need not imply that he was a timid man. He was a Master in Israel, a scholar among the Pharisees, a member of the Sanhedrin. He was a man of great wealth and station. He sent a hundred pounds of spices for the burial of Jesus, which only a rich man could do. He could not have it known that he had gone to seek wisdom of this untaught Galilean, this dangerous new teacher. He would immediately lose his standing and he was not ready to take that risk until he knew more certainly that it was worth it. And yet he was determined to be a "seeker," even if his seeking had to be done in the darkness of the night.

But, "seeker" though he was, he considered himself an expert in religion and he began by saying, "Rabbi, we know," when he didn't really know. In the old days at Harvard, when Francis Bowen taught philosophy there *ex cathedra*, a student in the class named Brown was usually wrong in his answers to Bowen's searching questions. One day when the professor was interpreting "the transcendental deduction of the Categories" in Kant's great *Critique*, the most difficult part of Kant's philosophy, Brown raised his hand and said: "Professor, I should think—" "No, Brown," thundered the professor, "*you* should not think!" "No, Nicodemus, you should not begin by saying *we know*, for you do not even know where the wind comes from. It blows as it lists, as it pleases, and you do not know where it comes from or where it is going."



Of course the Weather Bureau thinks it knows in this enlightened age. Look in the right-hand corner of the *New York Times* and you will learn which way the wind blows, whether it is from Saskatchewan or from the Atlantic. We have an idea that we know exactly where the wind comes from and whither it is going. But really, in the last analysis, the wind is as mysterious to us as it was to Nicodemus, the Master in Israel. We locate pressure areas. We determine directions. We map isothermal lines and post them up for guidance, but wind is just as great a mystery as ever. We can quote:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star;  
I need not wonder what you are,  
For seen by spectroscopic ken  
You're helium and hydrogen.

But we use only *words* and do not really explain. The more we study wind or weather or anything else, the more we are driven back to ultimate mystery and to an attitude of wonder.

Nicodemus at the outset of the conversation in the dark had his sense of security shattered by discovering that he was ignorant of the simplest fact of his outside world, and had better not begin with "We know." Jesus proceeds to take his visitor from the mysteries of the outside world to the even greater mysteries of the inside world. *We* know little enough, surely, of the ultimate nature of any of the facts of our visible world, but we are especially limited in the range of our knowledge of our inside world, how we know, how we get from our consciousness of ideas to our certainties of external facts that correspond with these ideas. The right attitude is wonder, and science has only increased the occasions for wonder.

The problem that Christ raised with His visitor from the

Sanhedrin was. How does one pass over the Great Divide from a purely "natural being" to an essentially "spiritual being"? How do you get from what *has* to be by the drive of natural forces to what *ought to be* to fit an ideal pattern. You cannot get something from nothing. You cannot originate what you do not possess. We are done now with electrons and protons and quantum. They do not explain spirit in man, they do not account for our love of truth and duty. They do not originate the religious attitude in us. This wind blows from a higher source. It does not come from Saskatchewan or Nova Scotia. We must take the position which is everywhere taken in St. John's Gospel, that there are two levels to our universe and that that which is highest in us comes from that which is highest in the universe. St. John calls this highest Reality, Spirit; Plato calls it *Nous*; others call it Mind or Reason. It is from this realm that the wind of the Spirit blows in our direction.

"You must be born from Above," is Jesus' word to his visitor. Spirit is not a subtler form of matter. You do not get it by a process of refining matter. Spirit can come only from Spirit. You cannot juggle rabbits out of a hat unless they are already in the hat. What is born of flesh is flesh. What are born of neurons are still neurons. When you are looking for the origin of Spirit you must look for a Higher Source which can account for it. It set Nicodemus wondering with a lot of new questions, which we have not yet succeeded in answering. This "upper birth" from the Higher Source does not sound strange to those of us who have consorted with Plato. He never thought that Soul was a product of matter or that the higher came from the lower.

What we need most now is the breaking in of the Beyond upon us, the commerce of relations with the Eternal Spirit. We have tried long enough to lift ourselves by our boot

straps or by our suspenders; to juggle spirit out of matter. We need an infusion of new life from God, an inspiration from on high, an invasion of the Spirit. We get set like plaster, we go on in old effete ways. We run into ruts. We lose our freshness, our wonder, our creative newness. We need the touch of new life from above. We need to hear again what Christ said to His "seeker" in the dark: "God so loved that He gave." We need to rediscover *Agape*, the love that loves everlastingly and gives itself without measure. He who believes and receives *hath* eternal life. Light has come into the world with new dawns. We do not need to sit any longer in the dark, in the night.

It is faith in Something Beyond us, enthusiasm for Something Above us that makes life worth living, that gets us out of our dead level and sets us free to go on, walking, like Habakkuk, in our high places. We must get out of the stage of worry into the stage of wonder; out of the stage of theory into the thrill of a love affair. I wish we had the Appendix to St. John's story to tell us how Nicodemus felt the next morning on his way home after the sun had risen and the new Light had come to his soul, and he could say with confidence, *We know*.

## III

*Truth—What's Truth?*

Nobody has preserved for us Pilate's tone of voice in that great scene in the Pretorium, which St. John has transmitted to us in the eighteenth chapter of his Gospel. If we only had a phonograph record of Pilate's words on this occasion it would throw considerable light upon the character of this man who has, through the centuries, remained a man of mystery. The novelists and the dramatists, and

the myth-makers have variously portrayed him, but he remains a hidden figure in the most important event of Christian history. His is the only name, outside the Holy Names, that got into the Apostolic Credo. He has won a certain kind of immortality, but his portrait remains a blur.

If he said with dignity and deep philosophic concern: "Truth—what is Truth?" we should think of him as a serious seeker, who was forced, by an intolerable political situation that had got beyond his control, to do what his soul loathed and hated to do. Weak, perhaps, and carried by the swirl of a mob situation whither he would not, but wishing sincerely that he might learn from this majestic prisoner *what Truth essentially and eternally is*. But if, on the other hand, he said in scorn, with an air of its absurdity, and with a snap of his finger, "Pough, what's Truth!" we should be bound to conclude that he was shallow and frivolous, and saw no significance in anything but pikes and swords and material things. Which tone of voice was it with which he said the words? We shall never know. But all that we actually know about Pilate makes it probable that he was dismissing with scorn the lofty allusion to Truth. As we have no phonograph record to guide us we may well leave Pilate in his dark niche of history and endeavor to discover what light there is for an answer to the momentous question. George Herbert Palmer used to tell in his Ethics Lectures of a small boy who was isolated from his playmates and put in a dark room as a punishment for telling a lie. After a considerable period of meditation on the sin he had committed he called out from his dark chamber: "I am ready now, mother, to truth-it." What does it mean to "truth-it"? What after all is *Truth*?

It is just an empty word, a series of sounds made by a larynx, if our universe is nothing but a concatenation of

vibratory atoms. There can be seriatim *fact events*, but not Truth. Truth is a judgment which a mind makes; and only a mind can make, and it involves a reference to something permanent and eternal—*that must be so*. A mind which announces *truth* must rise above facts of observation, must organize the facts in reference to a standard of reality, must see the truth which explains the facts, and further, must maintain the judgment that, so long as the facts and conditions remain unchanged, this truth must continue to be true. We can talk about truth only in a world that is spiritually endowed and undergirded, only in a world that has a Mind-Foundation to its structure. James Arthur Balfour said in his *Foundations of Belief*,<sup>1</sup> "We are driven in mere self-defense to hold that behind these non-rational forces, and above them, guiding them by slow degrees, and, as it were, with difficulty, *stands that supreme Reason in whom we must believe, if we are to believe anything.*" The way of Truth is one of the surest pathways to God. If Truth eternally *must be so*, then it follows, as the day follows the night, that there is a permanent spiritual basis to this "vale of mutability," with its passing events, its comings and goings, its births and deaths.

That is precisely what Christ said to Pilate. "My kingdom," He said, "the Realm in which I move as a bearer of Truth, is not in this world, the world of spears and pikes and things you handle. My Realm lies elsewhere—not here where you settle events with swords and crosses, otherwise we should be fighting. If you want to know whether I am a King, the answer is YES. For this cause was I born, and to this end came I into the world to bear witness to the Truth, and that means to the Realm to which I belong, the Realm that makes Truth a possible Reality."

<sup>1</sup> P. 322.

I have only slightly expanded and interpreted the implications of the great words to Pilate on that momentous morning in the Pretorium. These lofty words are a continuation, on a crisis-level, of the calm and peaceful words Christ had spoken the evening before to His little band of worried disciples. "I have been speaking to you this evening," He said, "that in the midst of all the troubles and confusions of this time *you might have peace*. In *this* world of mutability you are bound to have troubles, tribulations, but be of good cheer, take courage, for I have overcome the world."

To "overcome the world" does not mean to ignore it, or to despise it, or to run away and leave it. It doesn't even mean being "other-worldly." That attitude is a very dangerous form of defeatism. And we must never forget that Christ was facing this coming event—Pilate, Herod, Annas, the mob, the Cross, and all its brutality, with an extraordinary sense of victory. "I have conquered." The victory in the soul is always the prelude to any worthwhile victory in the outside world.

But the reason, once more, for this inside victory, at the Supper, was the same as the reason for the triumphant note in the Pretorium. It was in both instances due to the fact that He belonged to a Realm of infinite resources, a Realm of Spirit which towered above the events of the hour, and yet interpenetrated these events and made them significant. I see no hope of "overcoming" in this crisis of today, or of establishing once more our faith in the eternal aspect of Truth, and, what is no less important, the eternal aspect of love, unless we can recover our faith in this transcendent and equally immanent Realm of the Reality of God as Spirit. Balfour, in another great book, *Theism and Hu-*

*manism*,<sup>2</sup> says: "When I speak of God I mean . . . a God whom men can love, a God to Whom men can pray, Who takes sides, has preferences, Whose attributes leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created."

There are many levels of faith. Some faiths are crude, based on wishes, on emotions, on superstitions, on unexamined survivals from earlier times. Some faiths, however, are stronger than the foundations of the Himalaya Mountains. They are built out of the essential structure of the mind itself. To doubt them is to doubt the mind with which you do your doubting. It is impossible to say that there is no such thing as Truth, for that very statement claims *to be* the truth, otherwise you wouldn't affirm it. To deny that there can be Truth is to affirm it! This faith of ours in Truth is one of the strongest woven cables that holds our world together, but Truth carries with it, as Christ is saying, inherently and inescapably the solidly grounded faith in a spiritual Realm of abiding Reality. This was the kind of faith St. Paul was talking about when he said: "Have your loins girt with Truth."

<sup>2</sup> P. 21.

## CHAPTER V

### WHEN THE EUROCLYDON IS BLOWING

#### I

#### *Safe to Land on Broken Pieces of the Ship*

In that famous account of St. Paul's shipwreck in Acts, the writer says: "Some on broken pieces of the ship escaped safe to land."<sup>1</sup> It is a suggestive picture of the world today.

For many months and years St. Paul had been counting on a visit to Rome. He had written the profoundest of all his interpretations of Christianity to the Church in that capital city, and the Epistle was intended to be a prelude to his visit. In a very unexpected way the opportunity came. He went as a prisoner in charge of a centurion of the Augustan cohort and he got to land on a broken piece of the ship.

Somewhere in the Adriatic Sea their ship was caught in a tempestuous wind-storm, called by translators, "Euroclydon." The ship was blown about like an eggshell for fourteen days in the teeth of this terrific storm, and then the passengers got to land on the island of Malta, on "broken pieces of the ship," with the entire cargo lost.

At the present moment the world is caught in a mighty "Euroclydon" which has raged violently, not for fourteen days, but for three years, and in parts of the world much longer, with danger to everybody in the area of the storm, and to nearly everybody else as well. It is in the end bound to be a broken world, and those who escape to safety will

<sup>1</sup> Acts XXVII:44.



do so only on broken pieces of the ship. We shall all emerge from the Euroclydon with broken fragments of our old comfortable civilization.

The thing that held St. Paul's mind steady in the grip of the Adriatic Euroclydon was his four anchors of faith. In the midst of the crisis it was not the captain of the ship who was in command of the situation, nor the centurion of the cohort. It was the prisoner. He stood up on the deck, with the storm roaring through the broken rigging, and the frightened seamen, soldiers and passengers standing around him, worn and hungry, and instantly he, perhaps with chains on his hands, dominated the wild scene. A little later the officers were to heave four anchors from the stern to hold the ship until morning, from the rocks on the shore of the island. But here on the deck, in the dark and in the storm, stood a man who was telling the group around him of the four anchors which held him firm and steady and unafraid, not only in the face of Euroclydons, but before the greater dangers of mobs and courts and headsmen. Here are his anchors: "I believe God"; "His I am"; "Him I serve"; and "He has given me those who sail with me."

That is pretty nearly a whole gospel. He does not say, "I believe in God." In a weak, thin way they all on the ship could say that. What St. Paul is saying for his first anchor is that he has discovered the Heart and Character of God, and that he not only believes in His existence but that he can settle back in complete trust and confidence in the divine purpose and have the assurance of everlasting Arms of love about him in the crisis and the peril. It is an incontrovertible conviction not only in the reality of God, but that He is *with us and for us*. That is an anchor.

The next one is a still surer grip on reality: "His I am." I not only believe Him, trust His character and feel safe in

His keeping, but I belong to Him. A little boy playing on the deck of a ship in a mighty storm was asked by a passenger if he wasn't afraid. "No, I am not afraid. My father is captain of the ship." We have found each other, St. Paul is saying, and I am His and He is mine. That was something new to the frightened men. It is still strange news to men's ears. They will say that God is an omnipotent, omniscient Being, but too exalted for us poor worms of the dust to *belong to Him*. That may be metaphysics, but it is not religion, and it is rather poor metaphysics! Here in this deep inner experience, "His I am; I belong to Him," is the sheet anchor of true religious faith.

And the third anchor goes even deeper into the soil: "*Him I serve*," which means, "He needs me for the carrying out of His purposes." This is St. Paul's famous principle that we are fellow-laborers, co-workers, with God. It immediately dignifies life and raises it to a new level. If it is true, it means that some of God's work in the world will never get done unless we do it. The compass needle is a very small affair, but Columbus would never have found America without it. Our range of life may not be very large, but there is some piece of God's work that will not be done through all the ages unless I do it. That insight ought to be an anchor in a stormy world, with the sails all aflap.

Then comes the fourth anchor—all these other lives depend on me. There are few things that bring greater solemnity and steadiness to one's life than the discovery that other persons' lives depend on us. In the high Alps you must not speak above a whisper, for a loud voice may reverberate and start an avalanche crashing down the mountain, so delicately balanced are the piled-up masses of snow. Well, social relationships, human dependencies, are even

more sensitive. Looks and whispers and even silences may affect other lives and settle their destiny. We know that other lives shape and mould us, but one wakes up all of a sudden to realize that other lives hang on us and are going to be shaped—perhaps to all eternity—by our course of life. This fourth anchor, the discovery that all the lives on the ship—two hundred and seventy-six—hung on him and on his faith and action, was not the least important of his four anchors in that Euroclydon near Malta.

I cannot think of anything else but this type of faith that will save us now. The old comfortable ship, which seemed to be unsinkable, is being wrecked before our eyes. We shall come to shore only on broken pieces of the ship. The safety of humanity and the capacity to rebuild our world depend almost entirely on the recovery of anchors of stability—pillars of faith, like those that held St. Paul calm and steady in his Mediterranean storm. The major psychologists are telling us that health depends in a high degree on *faith*. It is even more true of social and national health, for the roots of morale are always fed deep down by *faith*.

If we do not learn the lesson, and if we go on supposing that all we need to do is to prepare our defenses and outfight the enemy on sea and land and in the air, we are doomed to see an incredible era ahead of us, and this time we may not even come to shore as we did once before, on broken pieces of the ship. The most important preparedness, for those of us who are here on land keeping the home fires burning, is the recovery of faith and the discovery of adequate resources for our souls.

But this text is capable of many other applications. How many of us have to do our work and to arrive at our goals of life with broken health and with a body not fully obedient to our will. Health is better than rubies. A body stored

with tireless energy is a treasure indeed. But how few of us have it. How many of the world's workers and creators have arrived with a broken body. Pascal was a lifelong invalid. So, too, was Elizabeth Barrett Browning. William of Orange—William III of England—had no health of body to back his mind. Whittier was never well. A host of my friends and acquaintances have got to shore clinging to a spar.

Many a faith has been rebuilt after faith has gone to wreck in some Euroclydon. In fact, a twice-born faith, a rebuilt faith, is superior to an inherited faith that has never stood the strain of a great testing storm. If you have not clung to a broken piece of your old ship in the dark night of the soul, your faith may not have the sustaining power to carry you through to the end of the journey.

The odd thing is that very often the solidest character, the greatest saintliness, comes after life has been broken. "I have come," Christ said, "to save sinners"—broken vessels—persons whose lives have cracked under the strain. Peter and Paul and Mary Magdalen and Augustine and John Bunyan may do for examples.

How often one hears of the excuse of broken time: "I should write but I have no time." "I am constantly interrupted." "My time is tattered to pieces." "I have only tiny fragments of time to do anything important." Well, most of the greatest pieces of work that have been done in the world have been done by persons who had no unbroken time. The greatest books, the greatest paintings, the greatest statesmanship have been produced in broken time. It is not the time that is lacking for great things—it is the spirit.

We may well come back, then, at the end to the way St. Paul got to Rome and fulfilled his commission "to attest the gospel of the grace of God." He, too, had broken health, broken time, a broken faith, a broken character, and a

broken world around him, and he got to land on a broken piece of the ship that carried him.

II

*Woe Is Me for I Dwell in Meshech*

Meshech is originally the name of a place in the Bible where everybody is fighting and where the atmosphere is all the time charged with thunder clouds of hate. The man who had this woe upon him wrote the one hundred and twentieth Psalm. It is a "Psalm of Ascent," which probably means a marching Psalm, written to be sung by pilgrims coming from the Dispersion—the Gentile World—to Jerusalem for the Great Feasts, especially at the time of the Passover. The most familiar of these marching Psalms are the joyous ones, the one hundred and twenty-first: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help"; the twenty-fourth: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye enlarged ye ancient Doorways, and the King of Glory will come in"; and the eighty-fourth, which is also a marching Psalm: "Blessed is the man who, passing through the vale of trouble, the vale of weeping, makes a well there, makes it a place of springs."

But this hundred and twentieth Psalm has no note of joy; it is a cry of pain. It is the outburst of a perplexed and discouraged heart, discouraged not by what is within him, but by his iron environment. Oliver Cromwell quoted this Psalm in one of his times of perplexity, and it fitted Carlyle's state of mind more than once.

On the map Meshech is the country south of the Black Sea, stretching out toward the Caspian Sea. It is traditionally supposed to have been originally settled by Tubal-Cain and his tribe. Tubal-Cain in the Bible is the first inventor

of weapons of death. His old fierce father Lamech struck the note which characterized the land of Meshech. It is the first poem in the Bible:

Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:  
For I have slain a man who wounded me;  
I have killed a young man who hurt me.  
If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,  
Lamech shall be avenged seventy and sevenfold.

This Meshech region was later the home of the fighting Hittites and still later the land that nurtured Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, the two most destructive men that have ever lived. But Meshech for this Psalmist is not a place on the map, it is a state of mind. This man is living in a world where there is no peace. It is for him a condition of life rather than a region on the globe. Woe is me, this man is saying, because I live in a world where the whole atmosphere is war and hate and destruction. There is a well-known cartoon of an old lady at the Zoo who says, "What a nasty-tempered brute that animal is. Every time I poke him with my umbrella he becomes fierce and dangerous!" That is the way Meshechs are made. A little boy came home from school crying. "What's the trouble?" his mother asked. "The teacher struck me because I couldn't spell a word, but I couldn't spell it any better after she struck me than I could before she struck me."

We can feel the tragedy of the cry of this Psalmist's heart. For the moment he is on his way to Jerusalem, which by its derivation means "Peace." But he dwells in Meshech, not in Jerusalem. Tubal-Cain, the weapon-maker, is in the saddle, not the blessed Peace-maker. Strangely enough, after the long stretch of centuries, we are ourselves living in Meshech—in a world engaged in global war which this

Psalmist could not possibly have imagined, with his tiny flat area of a Mediterranean world. We seem bound to live for a long period in Meshech, in a world at war, in a world bent on destruction, in a world busy, like Tubal-Cain, inventing weapons, but at a pace and on a scale that would have amazed the son of Lamech. We are busy beating our plowshares and our pruning hooks into swords and into guns and into bombs.

It is very difficult, in this Meshech atmosphere, to keep one's mind clear and free for the tasks that minister to life. It is difficult to sleep, for Meshech murders sleep for one who sees in thought the actual human faces in the areas that are bombed; for one who feels the desolation of conquered regions, and for one who knows in his sensitive soul how many children are starving in this world of Meshech. What life is like for a growing child is largely settled by the kind of world he is in. It is always the children that suffer first and suffer most in Meshech. Homes go to wreck, schools often cease to exist, and little bodies are a prey to rickets and tuberculosis. Fears sweep the young minds and there are permanent mental twists, which even the final peace does not cure.

We thought the last war would bring an end to Meshech, that nobody would ever say again: "Woe is me for I live in Meshech." But we now know that that war was in reality a war-breeder, a maker of Meshechs. To some people Meshech is a tragedy because of the ultimate danger it threatens to their life and property. But to many of us it is intolerable because of what it does to our world, to men's minds to children and children's children, to human ideals and toward the postponement of the social order that is essential for the nurture of good lives, and because of the destruction which it entails of the goods and assets that are necessary for

the creation of that long-desired new social order. Once it was believed to be a way to cultivate heroism and to promote nobility. It may still do that for some of the leaders but what Meshech does to the minds and the bodies of the great mass of citizens who make up the camps and the fighting forces, is not in the line of heroism or of nobility.

We must see to it at all costs that there shall be a group, a remnant, of persons who are not content to dwell in Meshech, who go on endeavoring to get the weapons of war back into plowshares and reapers. The iron is neutral. It goes just as readily into plows as into tanks. It all depends on the atmosphere of the time which article is beaten out of the original iron.

At the center of Christ's teaching is His Gospel of Grace. It is the new splendor of Love in God which Christ has revealed. It is the way of love and gentleness, of tenderness and forgiveness. There must be some of us, even while the world is living in Meshech, who go on with the splendor of love and exhibit the glory of this new force. There must be some of us who go on saying, with William Blake:

I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.

Jerusalem to take the place of Meshech.

### III

#### *The Winnowing Fan*

John the Baptist announced that a principle of winnowing—of separation—operates always and everywhere in the universe. It is another way of expressing what the prophet



Amos was enunciating in his principle of moral gravitation: "I saw God holding a plumb-line in His hand," says Amos. "God has a winnowing fan in His hand," says the later prophet, John.

This "winnowing fan" is everywhere in evidence in the Near East and in the Orient. From the coasts of Japan all the way around the world, going west, to the shores of the Mediterranean, in the right season for it, the winnowing fan is a familiar sight, wherever one lands or skirts the shore. It is a fan-shaped shovel and with it the farmer throws his grain—rice or wheat or barley—up in the air and wind does the winnowing, leaving a heap of grain in one spot and a heap of straw and chaff in another spot to the windward of the thrower. Everybody who heard John talk of the fan, the wheat and the chaff, had a vivid mental picture of the scene of separation, and they had seen chaff burning, as in autumn in our wasteful land we see leaves go up in flames and smoke.

John was a stern diagnoser of what was wrong with his nation, with his world. Like Matthew Arnold's "physician of the iron age," he could strike his finger on the place and say: "Thou ailest here and here." He was aware that the people who came out in throngs to hear the unshorn man in camel's hair and leather, had lost the track. They seemed to him like "a generation of vipers," "a brood of snakes," moving toward the wrath to come, the everlasting bonfire that consumed the winnowed chaff.

John could diagnose but he had no healing balm to offer, no panacea for the evil times. He could thunder powerfully against what was wrong and he could announce the terrors of doom, but he lacked a transforming dynamic. He could blow like the wind from cold spaces, but he could not warm and melt like the sun. But, after all, it is an inward warmth

and power from beyond the sun that does the transforming work.

John, as Christ said, was no reed shaken with the wind, no man clothed in soft raiment, living delicately, but a truly great prophet, one of the very greatest of the old type. But, as He also said, the very least person who had the spirit of the new way and belonged by inward life and power to the Kingdom of the God of love, was greater than John. We must somehow learn this secret, must discover the dynamic, if we are to rebuild our shattered world. We can no doubt thunder against "the brood of snakes," but that does not restore order and a good peace. That calls for another dynamic, for a balm that will heal the wounds that hate has made.

One wonders what John would have said if he had been confronted with the prodigal son with his swine husks, or with Mary Magdalene, or with the sinning woman whom the advocates of stoning brought to Christ. You could not remake them by thundering about chaff and bonfires. They were "down and out" and would have seemed to the diagnosing physician of an iron age as fit only for the refuse heap. The amazing thing about Jesus was that He found some of His most remarkable saints in what looked to those of the old order like hopeless brands for burning. He knew how to get souls out of rubbish heaps, and He knew that the windward heap still had some promising material.

I am not discussing now what will happen after death. I know less about that than many of my theological friends claim to know. It would certainly take a very wise Judge of all the earth to know where to place in the eternal assizes the person whose earthly life has been twisted out of plumb by bad inheritance for which he was not responsible, for the person spoiled by the mistakes of family nurture, or

tainted almost from the first by an unwholesome environment of which there are numerous types. We shall do well, I think, to leave with great humility these vast problems with the Gardener of souls, Who will know best which ones can be transplanted to "bloom to profit other-where." I am concerned now with problems of time and of earth. And I am convinced that you cannot divide people by the winnowing-fan method into heaps of pure grain and heaps of waste rubbish.

Perhaps we can learn something, though John could have known nothing about it, from the way modern manufacturers create by-products out of what once was only waste material, fit for burning. Almost every manufacturing process has a certain amount of left-over "waste." One of the greatest economic achievements is the skilful discovery of methods of turning this "waste"—this chaff heap—into a useful and valuable by-product. Sometimes the by-product becomes more profitable even than the original product of the business. Coal and oil and gasoline and gold and the immense museum of fossils may be thought of as by-products of the great processes of nature. The moon is a by-product of earth-making, and the earth is a by-product of the solar-system-making. St. Paul's Epistles were by-products of problems that arose in the apostolic Church, and the list is endless. Whether we ourselves and our consciousness are by-products of a cosmic process, as some of "the minute philosophers" have suggested, depends on the question of who is actually running the great manufacturing plant of the universe. It may turn out that the creation of beings like us is the main cosmic business, and that the stupendous aim of the Maker is to produce beings who have the unique power to steer action by thought and conscious purpose.

But, in any case, there is a prodigious amount of waste,

both in the universe and in human lives. We look with regret on the heaps of useless slag and shale and dump that deface many regions of our beautiful world. Most of our rivers are polluted by waste products that pour into them from factories. The air of almost every city is charged with waste carbon that ought to be turned into by-products.

But much more serious to one who reflects on it are moral rubbish heaps which human society produces, our slums, our underworld, the spoiled lives that cannot pass the tests, the output of wars and bad politics, and the unwisdom in the management of great masses.

Some day—may the day come soon, now that it is so needed—we shall learn how to make a noble by-product where at present we see only heaps of waste. I have a belief, and it comforts me, that the world, as Keats thought, is “a vale of soul-making” and that the great business of “the Artist who sculpts the globes of the firmament and writes the moral law,” is this creative work of soul-making. And if we knew how to help Him in this major business, as we do know how to co-operate with Him in the lesser business of raising potatoes, we could stop this appalling waste, and out of the social chaff heaps and slag mounds and the refuse of the war, make a glorious by-product, as fine as the main business of soul-making.

St. Paul was afraid on one occasion <sup>2</sup> that he might conceivably be a “castaway.” He was not thinking of the rubbish pile and the burning chaff. He was thinking of the “has-been,” the “out-dated,” the “left behind”—the failure to keep up with the onward moving march of the Spirit and the process of life. It was the relic, the museum piece, that he was afraid of. The stylographic pen, after the invention of the fountain pen, the old high bicycle after the

<sup>2</sup> I Cor. IX:27.

tandem type came in, the T-model after the gear-shift and stream-line type appeared, illustrate the sort of "has been" that progress produces. This danger of being a "castaway" is a danger that besets us all and to which the wise person keeps awake and keenly sensitive.

But a universe that is apparently building new worlds out of nebulae and perhaps out of "cosmic rays," ought to teach us not only how to avoid being "castaways," but how to turn what used to be waste heaps into the by-product of beautiful souls, "no longer half akin to brute."

## CHAPTER VI

### WHAT A GREAT TEACHER TAUGHT

#### I

#### *In the Lecture-Room in Ephesus*

On what we traditionally call his Third Missionary Journey, St. Paul "discussed," or "reasoned," or "taught," every day from eleven o'clock to four, for two years, in the lecture-room of Tyrannus, in Ephesus. Tyrannus no doubt was a philosopher of one of the Greek schools, who did his lecturing in the morning and rented his hall for the rest of the day to the teacher of a new school of thought. In that part of the world the hours from eleven to two are considered to be too hot for strenuous effort, and most persons took siestas then, as they do now, and so it was an easy time to secure a lecture-room. One could be assured that at this time only those who were deeply interested, and could forego sleep, would come.

Ephesus was the capital city of Asia, the third most important city of the Roman Empire. St. Paul's strategy took him to great centers of population. He had had Ephesus in mind for a long time. On his former Missionary Journey he was minded to "speak the word" in Asia, which means Ephesus, but he was for the moment "forbidden by the Holy Spirit." We do not know why he was "forbidden," but it really means that "way did not then open" for his visit to the great city on the shores of the Aegean. He had, however, on his way from Corinth to Syria, at the end of his

so-called Second Missionary Journey, in company with Priscilla and Aquila, stopped in Ephesus and inaugurated his work there. After a flying visit to Jerusalem, Antioch and his churches in Galatia, he returned to Ephesus and labored there for three years—the longest period of any one of his missions.

He began his work as usual in the Jewish synagogue where he would find many “God-fearers,” i. e., Gentile “seekers,” who would be the first to respond to his message and who would form the nucleus of his Church there. It appears that his beloved Epaenetus, plainly a Gentile, was his “first fruit,” his first convert.<sup>1</sup> The sixteenth chapter of Romans furnishes a list of the “pillars” of his Ephesian Church. He was quickly expelled from the synagogue, as naturally happened in most cities as soon as he set forth the central ideas of his teaching, his “Aegean Gospel.” When this happened he turned his efforts to win the Greco-Roman population, especially those who had been trained morally and spiritually in the synagogue and were already “seekers,” “God-fearers.”

Ephesus had been the home of one of the greatest philosophers of Greece, Heraclitus, who was the first thinker to use the word *Logos* for the ultimate reality, a phrase of great significance for the future of Christianity. Heraclitus was as distinctly “a forerunner” of Christianity as John the Baptist was. “Logos” here in Ephesus meant Mind, Spirit, Intelligence, Wisdom, and this teaching had been a preparation for the lecturer in the Hall of Tyrannus. But the popular reaction to St. Paul was hostile. He carried on his mission in the face of terrific opposition. It seemed like fighting beasts in the arena. “It seems to me,” St. Paul wrote, “it seems to me that God means us apostles to come

<sup>1</sup> Rom. XVI:5.

in at the end as doomed men. We are made a 'spectacle' for men and angels." At some period during the three years he had "the sentence of death within himself," and "Priscilla and Aquila risked their necks for him." He called Andronicus and Junias his "fellow-prisoners." He used the striking phrase, "I die daily."

Difficult as they were, these years in Ephesus were tremendously effective in this great wicked capital city. We must try to recover if we can what went on from eleven to four in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus. We can be pretty sure that there was no "discussion" about Heraclitus, though there almost certainly was in the early morning lectures. One Person was at the center of St. Paul's thinking and he always began by interpreting Him as the Revelation of God, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. The prevailing conception of God in schools of this period was a Being utterly transcendent, entirely above and beyond all finite things and beyond the range of human thought. God not only is not known but *cannot* be known. The Stoics, to be sure, held that God is *pervasive*, but their pervasive God was a refined form of matter. They levelled down instead of levelling up.

St. Paul met this theory of an unknown and unknowable God with the claim—to him an absolute certainty—that we know the mind of God, the character of God, the love of God, revealed in Jesus Christ. Against the Stoic materialism, he put his glowing interpretation of the living Christ-Spirit, producing in man a new creation, bringing a power of life—a dynamic—to overcome sin and to secure man from superstition and magic, which dominated this capital city.

Here, in the Hall of Tyrannus, he gave the Ephesians a



new interpretation of man. Here where stood the most splendid temple of the ancient world, where all Asia came to worship Diana, St. Paul taught that man himself can become a holy temple, with a central shrine within, where God as Spirit reveals Himself. That was news, that was strange good news. Through Christ, operating within him as a spiritual life-giving power, a man, who has been living, as Ephesians were accustomed to live, can be changed into a likeness to Christ and can become a temple for the Divine presence, holier and more sacred than Diana's temple. That was very different from the early morning lecture which Tyrannus gave.

One day, between eleven and four, we may be sure, was given to an interpretation of Love as the greatest thing in the world, as the very Heart of God, and the new way of life for man who at Ephesus and everywhere else had been accustomed to be an organ of hate and vengeance. "Love is not provoked." "Love endures all things." "Love never fails." "Love does not *cease*; as all other things do; it abides." And best of all, it makes a new type of world-order, a new kind of human community, a society through which God's revelation of Himself can go on through the ages.

Another day, never to be forgotten by those who were in the hall, the eternal destiny of man was unfolded. "You are not meant to be mere fragile, ephemeral, mortal beings, sipping sweets for a brief day, and then going back into the clay from which you were moulded. Christ is the bringer of Eternal Life. He is a new Adam, a new type of man. When our minds have been enlightened by Him we look beyond the things that are seen, and behold, eternal things become real to us, and then we know that if this temporal form of ours goes down, as it will do, we have already

formed within a structure that is God-made and eternal, and God has created us for this very purpose, that mortality might be swallowed up in fuller life.

Nothing more important has ever been said in any lecture-room than what St. Paul said here in the Hall of Tyrannus. Great revolutions in thought come and go. There are eras of faith and eras of materialism. There are times when the world is absorbed in the conquest of arms, or in quick temporal successes. But Christ continues through all the shifts and changes to be the major spiritual interest of the race. He remains as clearly today as on the shores of the Aegean Sea in the first century, the central spiritual hope of the world.

## II

*Finally*

What an awe-inspiring word "finally" is! It is the end, the terminus. It is the last word, or, if not, the word just before the last word. It is much more solemn-sounding than the phrase, "so long"! which so many Americans use at the parting, or "take care of yourself," which nobody can do—least of all now.

In a priceless letter to his dearest friends at Philippi in Macedonia, whom he calls "my joy and crown," and who "shine like beacons in the world," St. Paul, almost at the very end of the letter, and apparently almost at the end of his life, wrote: "Finally, brothers." A little time before he wrote this letter he had written a charming little letter to his friend Philemon at Colossae, in which he calls himself "Paul, the aged"—Paul, the old man. He was probably not yet sixty, but prisons and shipwrecks and scourgings and labors had made him feel old. Here then is an oldish man,

writing out of his years of experience to the persons he loved best in the world, and he has come to his last word to them, and one of the last words he would ever write in this world. What should he say as his finale?

Let us stop for a moment and see how this man, now old with labors, in prison and about to write his last and ripest autumnal words of wisdom to his friends, happened to come to Philippi in the first place, and to have these friends there. The steps which led Paul to Philippi are of all things extraordinary. He had been visiting for the second time the churches in Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra—churches of Galatia. His work was finished there and he was looking for a new field. His mind turned first to the Province of Asia, especially its metropolis, Ephesus, and its six other great cities, but for the moment he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to enter that field—the time was not ripe for it. His mind then turned to the important Province of Bithynia on the Black Sea, a region which later, in the time of Constantine, became a region of primary importance as a center of Christianity. Here again he was divinely checked. All doors seemed to be shut in his face. He appeared to be check-mated. He was at what seemed to be a terminus. How often we of later times have met our Bithynia! How often, like Paul, we have stood baffled before doors that would not open, however much we besieged the door!

Cromwell was right when he said: "A man never goes so far as when he doesn't know where he is going." We have here in this crisis of St. Paul's life a striking instance of Cromwell's saying. Paul felt himself moved toward high ends without knowing the goal. He felt himself mysteriously pushed on toward Troas, where great things once had happened in the world. Here his mind was in a turmoil and

an extraordinary dream revealed the suppressed wishes that were surging in his mind, or at least, in the inward deeps below his mind. The call of Macedonia, to Europe, was the emergence of a slowly formed purpose, which had apparently been surging up in him, as he journeyed, and which came to light in his vision. The decision was no doubt assisted by contact with a certain real man from Macedonia, probably the man who wrote the "We-passages" in the Book of Acts, which begin just at this point.

St. Paul reversed the line of the conquest of Alexander the Great, who went from Macedonia by the route from Philippi to Troas to marry the West and the East into one vast empire. St. Paul, going west from Troas to Philippi, began the greatest conquest of the ages, a conquest still under way to make the kingdoms of the world the Kingdom of Christ. The "call" to Macedonia was the beckoning of Europe, of the vast West, of unknown lands beyond the Pillars of Hercules. What a strange thoroughfare this man was opening as he sailed with a man from Macedonia from Troas to Philippi!

Now, perhaps eight years later, a prisoner in Rome, awaiting death, but, as we shall see, with Caesar's household honeycombed by the Gospel, he was writing his last letter, and has come to "finally." This is what he said at the end: "Rejoice all the time, keep rejoicing, and the serenity of God, which passes all comprehension garrison your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. I know how to abound and how to be brought low. Power from somewhere Beyond me comes into me and I can do all things that need to be done; can stand everything that has to be endured. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are beautiful, whatsoever things are high-toned, set your mind continually on these things, and on

resources beyond things." Then comes the amazing salutation: "All the saints in Caesar's Household [this Caesar was Nero] salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

It may be that all these strange Bithynias where *we* are checked in our purposes, or check-mated, are expedients to drive us on to a Troas and the farther shores, where God has some unexpected blessing or service waiting for us. Perhaps even death is a Bithynia to a Beyond which we shall hail with joy and greet with "finally."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE NEW SKY-LINE

#### I

#### *The Resurgence of Faith*

Every intelligent person in America, even now in the midst of the fighting, is deeply concerned over the type of peace that will emerge when the fighting ends, and concerned, too, about the creation of the right social-economic-political structure for the reorganization of the post-war world. Some of us know that stable world orders cannot be built while men and women and children are starving, and there surely is no point in talking of nation-planning to persons who have no home, no fire and no breakfast. There must be, first of all, a wise and extensive campaign of relief and reconstruction, actuated and maintained in a spirit of unselfishness, genuine sympathy and understanding, with no ulterior aims. We need to have our imagination captured so that we *see* vividly the actual suffering human faces, so that we feel pathetically what hunger does to children and are moved by the agonies and slow crucifixions of human beings like ourselves living in the occupied areas of Europe and Asia.

But we need to realize that there are strange stirrings of hope and expectation already moving across the world. There are unmistakable signs of awakening, and dreams of a new epoch are abroad. There is a surge for freedom and enlarged life in almost all the countries we have been accus-

tomed to consider backward, and all these stirrings of the human heart are prophesyings of great significance. We cannot possibly return to the kind of world that existed between the wars. It is one of the evidences of man's intrinsic greatness that it is just then, when he seems to be at the end of his human resources, that he rises above himself, and *does* what he could not do. It is quite possible that we may be at the fringe and frontier of a new and marvellous epoch.

If, however, it is to be realized as something more than a vague hope and yeasty dream, the crisis of our time must bring to our lives a profound spiritual awakening, an actual resurrection of creative faith. The type of religion I am eager about for this crisis not only brings a vision of relief and enables a person to live triumphantly, with inward peace and serenity amid the stern conditions of life, but, what is much more, it gives the spirit of man the fortification which is needed for taking up the task of rebuilding the world on a diviner pattern, with a new sky-line.

The supreme epochs in the history of the race have for the most part been marked by a fresh discovery of the springs and sources that supply the soul of man with powers beyond himself, and by the breaking in of an Environment of Life beyond the visible sky-line—the emergence of the Unseen. The reason that these epochs have been so unique is that in them man has not only risen beyond himself but he has discovered the sublimity of the reality of God and the spiritual world where he *belongs*. Then when that happens there comes into active operation a creative faith that carries everything before it, because *living* has become a joy. There is a moving story of the early Christian martyrs, who, in an era of imperial persecution, were taken to North Africa and put in the mines there to toil for the remainder of their lives. With their implements of labor they cut on

the walls of the mines the words, *vita, vita, vita—life, life, life*. They did not mean life after death; they had discovered a spring and principle of life, which made living a thrilling business, even in the confinement of the mines.

"Faith," as William James once put it, "is the sense of the exceedingness of the possible over the actual." But it must not be a *tour de force* faith, a lifting of oneself by the bootstraps, a leap in the dark out beyond the solid ground for feet to feel and stand on. No, the faith I am eager to see revived for our crisis must be dynamic, and therefore it must spring out of the actual discovery of the eternal realities by which men live and move and have their being, and overcome the stubborn conditions of their outside world. If there does come a genuine resurgence of this dynamic faith it will be due, I am convinced, to a profounder appreciation of man's inherent possibilities as a spiritual being in direct mutual and reciprocal correspondence with a Spiritual Environment akin to us and for which we were made.

Immanuel Kant who, in spite of his blind spots, is next to Plato my guiding philosopher, always held that man's reason demands the unconditioned, that is the infinite and absolute, in every one of its manifold operations—in the realm of knowledge, in the realm of morals, and in the realm of values. There can, he insisted, be no *real explanation* of anything until the mind transcends the limits of what the understanding can describe. And we can go beyond those limits, not by making our descriptions more exact and mathematical, but by living our way into the heart of those realities we need for creative significant life.

Until we discover the way to expand the sky-line of life and find the essential goal posts for the thrilling game of life, we shall have a recurrence of cynicism and a return of the sense of frustration. Even if we should succeed in secur-



ing the four freedoms, and, *mirabile dictu*, had a world "free from want" and "free from fear," it would not be free from the oppression of frustration. Man cannot be confined in the nut-shell of a world of describable basic material elements, and not have bad dreams of futility. We are so made, so endowed, that we yearn beyond the limits, however extended, of a world made up of the earth's crust, the sun, moon and stars and innumerable vibratory atoms. One of the major troubles of our time, which has led to our other troubles, has been the attempt to live in a severely "reduced" world, with insufficient scope for the soul to expand its native wings. Where vision fails, and there is no sphere for transcendent faith, the people perish, as ancient prophets declared. Vitamins for man's soul are as essential to life as they are for his body.

With all our planning, therefore, for a peace that will last, and for a world-order that will guarantee to all races and colors an essential political and economic freedom, we must not forget to strive and plan and work for a fresh revival of religious life and faith. It is, I believe, even now in process of gestation, which means getting ready for birth. I am impressed, everywhere I go, with the large number of eager "seekers" I find. It has been particularly true of college and university groups during these last unsettled years. But they are not easily satisfied. They do not take kindly to traditional and formal types of religion. The historic churches will need to be very patient with this new crop of "seekers" and, more than that, they will need themselves to undergo a profound sea-change before they can harvest this growing crop. But it is a vastly important opportunity. The educational institutions of all the grades from below up could at this stage do very much more than they are at present doing to foster this "seeking" aspiration among

their students. Where there are teachers, or professors, who are interested in this aspect of life and who know how to speak to the condition of earnest "seekers," dissatisfied with substitutes for life itself, the movement is accelerated by a natural process. Where there is a wise and understanding chaplain, and a warm and creative chapel service, the process is still more accelerated, and spiritual growth is as natural and normal as intellectual growth. What is needed more than anything else now in educational circles is a sound philosophical basis for the conviction of a spiritual constitution in man's being as a person and equally in the total structure of the universe; and a sound philosophical basis for a genuinely moral order in man and in the world to which man belongs. There is no genuine scope for life in a world reduced to a "block universe" and a "puppet man," pushed and pulled into action by invisible springs.

The missionary colleges and universities in the Near East and in the Orient have given a remarkable demonstration of the transforming power that a truly creative and spiritually guided educational institution can bring to bear on the lives of its students. Robert College in Constantinople and the American University of Cairo, to mention only two, have been working miracles in the Moslem world of the Near East. The twelve Christian colleges and universities of China explain in very large degree the new atmosphere and awakened spirit of Chinese youth today. These institutions have not been imparting formal or sectarian religion. They have been interpreting the deeper springs and the higher liberating realities by which men live a rich and significant life. And one result of this immensely important work, and of the heroic spirit of the modern missionaries, is the fact that they will be welcomed back with

glowing enthusiasm in all the countries from which the fortunes of war have driven them out. I have visited these institutions, more times and for much longer periods than was possible for Wendell Willkie's one short visit, but I have been stirred with the same enthusiasm and I have felt an appreciation similar to his for their constructive work.

But there can hardly be the great religious awakening and spiritual resurrection I am calling for without the coming of a new stage of insight, sacrificial devotion and enlargement of vision and aims in the Church, which is composed of the churches across the world. This is the hour for greatness of spiritual power and magnanimous aims in the Church, which ought to be on earth the organ of the Kingdom of God, and the body of men and women here and now expressing in the world the mind and spirit and will of Jesus Christ.

Whatever happens to our world now we must keep the Church at its distinctive spiritual mission, and if we are ever to rebuild our broken world on right lines for a great future, we Christians must get closer together and we must work together, not as the guardians of a sect, but as vital followers of Christ. The darker the world and the deeper the virus of hate the more glowing must be our Christianity and the more triumphant the note of our faith. Martin Niemöller, one of the most valiant Christians in the world, and perhaps the one who has suffered most for his faith, has nobly said: "I have a consciousness that we all belong together as one great congregation of the Body of Christ and we should like to enter the spaciousness of a real Christian brotherhood, which will unite us one with the other and make us free to serve one another." And Kagawa, one of the greatest followers of Christ now on the earth, also like Nie-

möller in the enemy's country, has been for years working for a united Christianity and for a religion of life and power.

These two men, if they live until the war is over, will be among the foremost religious leaders of the world, working for the unity of Christianity and for a new era of spiritual religion. But we cannot wait for the war to be over. We must have Christian co-operation *now*. We want the unity of the Church *now*. We want the resurgence of a new and creative faith for our supreme tasks *now*. If the churches are not struck awake by the present crisis and the momentous tasks which confront us now, they will certainly not be ready for the new and unpredictable situations that will emerge when the fighting ends.

What we need most is a more vital church service, which reaches the deeps in the attenders and refreshes them with a powerful sense of reality. It ought to have the effect that the rising of the water has on a ship in a lock, which goes out for its voyage on a higher level. There ought to come, more often than usually does come, a return to the freshness of life, the joy and radiance which was a striking feature of Christ's life, even though He was consciously moving toward tragic issues. We need to recover that spell of eternity, under which His early followers lived and wrought and suffered. It brought to them, as it always does bring, a new dimension of life, a notable expansion and inner amplitude of being. Here, not in outworn formulations, is the pattern for our new time, and in breathings of the ever-living Spirit is the inspiration for the birth of a dynamic faith that will bring a new epoch for religion.

## II

*Comfort Me with Apples*

This cryptic yearning to be comforted with apples breaks out in "the Song of Songs," often wrongly called "the Song of Solomon." The little book is usually included in the collection of the Books of "Wisdom Literature," traditionally ascribed to King Solomon. It is quite obviously written to glorify love as the greatest thing in the world. Here follows the great passage: "Love is as strong as death. It is a very flame of God Himself. Many waters cannot quench it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be a mere nothing in comparison with love." That was evidently written by somebody who was actually in love and not merely theorizing about it. But is this book a human love-poem, or is it a lofty mystical revelation of Divine Love, vividly expressing in a hidden parable the relation of the Divine Lover to the human soul, or perhaps the relation of the Lord to His chosen people, or again, perhaps, the relation of the heavenly Bridegroom to the Church, the Bride? There can be no question that the main tendency through the centuries has been to give the Song a mystical interpretation, first by the Jewish scribes and rabbis, and later by the fathers and theologians of the Church, who gave it a new meaning. It would hardly have got into the canon of Scripture if it had been thought of as a voluptuous human love-story, with its descriptions of kisses and a too eager description in detail of the parts of the body not often talked about in polite or reserved religious circles.

A literature has accumulated about this Love-Song that is astonishing both in its volume and in its quality. A say-

ing, also attributed wrongly to Solomon, but quite true in fact, declares that "of the making of books there is no end," and it might with considerable truth be said, "of the making of books about this Love-Song there is no end." The rabbis, of course, began it, and this Song has had a recurrent influence on the age-long development of Jewish Mysticism. But this has been a meager affair in comparison with its majestic place in the course of Christian thought. I do not know of any reference to it in the New Testament. St. Paul calls the Church the Bride of Christ and so, too, does the Book of Revelation, and one would have thought that the Love-Song would have been quoted, but it was not quoted, though it may have consciously or unconsciously suggested the idea.

As soon as the Church Fathers began writing commentaries on the Books of the Bible, which they very early did, this Song was captured for the Church. The original lover, with "love strong as death," was forgotten and the Song became a mighty allegory, and greatly helped toward the formation of the lines of the development of the Church. But it was Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), next to St. Francis of Assisi the greatest saint of pre-reformation Christianity, who captured this Song of Songs as the major mystical allegory of the ages. He was preaching a vast series of sermons on the Song of Songs when he died. He had already preached one hundred and eighty sermons on the first two chapters of the Book when his voice was stilled. These sermons make two great volumes, and if he had completed the task there would have been five such volumes. The saint was preaching to men and to men who were not supposed to know anything about human love. The dear man did his best not to have the voluptuous words of the Song suggest

to his hearers anything carnal, and he labored with immense ingenuity to spiritualize every phrase, even "kisses on the mouth," and make it throw light on the Divine Lover's mystical way with the soul and with His Bride, the Church. One feels a kind of tremulous awe as he follows the mystical wanderings of this great soul of the twelfth century through the labyrinth of this ancient love-story. From this time on the high allegorical interpretation of the Song poured full flood into the mystical literature of Europe, and reached its high-water climax in the experience and in the writings of Madame Guyon, where it becomes a Bay of Fundy tide. On the whole this influence was an unfortunate factor.

If the amount of thought and mental effort bestowed on the interpretation of this Song of Songs had been devoted to the practical social tasks of the world and to the amelioration of oppression and suffering, it might almost have checked poverty and abolished war, but the fascination of great minds carried them into this astute business of expanding the ingenuity of finding mystical meanings in this far-off love-poem. Is there anything stranger than this strange story of man's search for the gold of hidden truth in an oriental love-story!

Sebastian Castellio, a noble French Humanist of the sixteenth century, was the first of the moderns to pronounce it a straight out human love-story. He was secretary to Calvin in Geneva when he proposed this radical interpretation. Calvin was no mystic, but for him every Book in the Bible was an inspired revelation of God, and it would seem like chaos come again to admit that the Song of Songs was a human love-story, and not an allegory of God's relation to man's soul and to the Church. He immediately demoted

Castellio, banished him from Geneva and treated this brave and tender man ever after as a dangerous enemy of the faith.

But truth is marvellously virile and in spite of Councils and Calvins, what is actually and eternally *so* finally gets itself established in the minds of men. We today live in an era when we begin our search for the meaning of Scripture by asking not what we are able to read into it by clever allegorizing, but by asking what the writer of the book actually meant in his own century when he wrote the book, and what is the natural way to interpret it. When we approach the Song of Songs in that state of mind we are almost bound to agree with Castellio that it was originally written as a human love-story. The Oxford Bible still carries such page-headings as "The Church's Love unto Christ"; "The Church's Victory and Christ's Love for Her"; "A Description of Christ by His Graces"; "The Church's Grace and the Vehemency of Love." But it requires an immense amount of ingenuity to discover these meanings in the text, and only with a spiritual "jimmy" can one pry out these hidden truths, though we may easily predict that the "jimmy" will still be used for years to come, as it has effectively been used through the centuries.

If it is a human love-poem, as Castellio believed and as modern scholars agree, what in substance is the theme of the story? It seems most probable that the heroine of the drama is a Shulamite maiden, dark of hue, like the tents of Kedar, but of striking beauty and comely form—"fairest among women"—"like a Rose of Sharon and a lily of the valley." She is a country maiden, born under an apple-tree in the garden, where her mother was in travail. And here, in the same apple orchard, she first met her lover and was "awakened" to love by him, the man whom "her soul loved



with a love strong as death." Everything was going smoothly with this love-match, when the king espied this charming beauty and wanted her for his harem. The litter of Solomon, the palanquin made of cedar of Lebanon, with a golden seat and purple curtains, and mighty men to execute the king's order, came to carry her off. She is brought to the royal banqueting house and love is made to her—"the banner over her is love." Her beauty is praised—eyes and hair, mouth and beautiful teeth—everything is as it should be for a bride to this expert royal lover.

But though the girl is fascinated by all this splendor and the royal wooing, her heart is with her country-shepherd lover who "feeds his flock among the lilies" and is "like a free young hart on the mountains." She was unyielding to all the blandishments; unmoved by the splendor and the perfumes of the palace—the myrrh and the spices. She looked out of the windows "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and yet unconquerable as an army under banners." She stood firmly for her original love, which floods could not drown, nor the glory of the palace change. Her heart is immovably set on her rustic lover and her one purpose is to return to the apple-tree in the garden, and the "comfort of apples," where she can be as "a seal upon the heart of her humble lover," whom "her soul loves." The story does not unfold with the order and form of a drama of Shakespeare. It is easy to miss the clew and the guiding thread. But I think the central theme is pretty clear. It is the constancy of love when it is deep and pure and true. It endures and is not overwhelmed by all the voluptuous appeals of "Solomon in all his glory." Take me back to the apple-tree, comfort me with apples, and let me have the lover "whom my soul loveth."

This is a story worth telling for its own sake. We do not

need to turn it into a vast mystical allegory to impart reality to it. Love is its own excuse for being. If I were inclined to make it an allegory at all, I should find the allegory in the natural intimation of the story, to come back from artificial splendor and cleverly constructed glories to the good old simplicities of life. The pomegranates, the myrrh and the spices are left behind for the comfort of apples in one's own backyard, and the unnatural wooing of a monarch is turned down for the genuine love of a true-blue honest country lover. This may not be mysticism but it is basic reality for the good life.

It has a very real message for our times today. We cannot have sound, solid, true life in our America by piling up wealth and constructing artificial splendors and expanding life *horizontally*. Disillusionment dogs that false track of life. Futility lies in wait for it. We *must* find the way back to simplicity. And that means, I am convinced, that there must be a return to the country, to the old apple tree, to the garden and the farm and the restoration of the rugged qualities of village life. The abandoned farms, the land gone back to alders and bushes and woods must once more become fertile land with orchards and gardens, and best of all, regions for pure abiding love, homes of true nurture, breeding places of men and women who have the honest-to-goodness moral and spiritual qualities that bring honor and permanence to a nation. Comfort us once again with apples!

Of course, if we are ever to get back into *life* again we shall need more than a return to simplicity and the comfort of apples from the good old country apple tree. We must find God and the River of Life and the Tree of Life, with its leaves of healing for the soul. That may perhaps involve

a saner type of mysticism than that drawn from the far-fetched analogy of this ancient Love-Poem.

## III

*The Everlasting Question—"Always It Asketh, Asketh"*

One of the most sublime passages in the Book of Isaiah, which is full of sublimities, is "the Oracle of Dumah," in the twenty-first chapter. "Dumah" here stands for Edom—Esau's Land—and the period is the tragic time of Assyria's militant ascendancy which threatened the life and the very existence of the small nations that lay in the border regions between Assyria and Egypt. It was only a question, like that of Polyphemus' guests, which one would be eaten last. The prophet appears to be standing on the ridge between Jerusalem and Edom, in the blackness of a terribly long night, and he hears in imagination the watchman on Mount Seir in Edom calling to the watchman on Mount Zion—"What of the night?" "How much longer is the night going to be?" "Is there no end to this pitch-darkness?" The cry is tremulous with fear and it throbs with the emotion of one who is in the darkness of a jungle full of threatening shapes.

Mendelssohn, with extraordinary genius and power, made use of this oracle in his "Hymn of Praise." Here the question is thrice asked, with growing intensity and urgency of the music, with an extraordinary range of tenor notes in ascending minors, arousing imagination and stirring emotion, "Watchman, will the night soon pass?" Mendelssohn's answer is musically more triumphant and joyous than is the prophet's answer. The chorus breaks forth with the glad sublime refrain: "The night is departing, the night is departing!"

Isaiah's answer is not so clear and not so joyous. It is ambiguous and enigmatical. It might perhaps be rendered, though it is not an exact translation, "The morning is coming, but the night is still here. Return, come again, inquire later"—with the implication, "We hope for better news." It is a fine blend of realism and idealism, of pessimism and hope. It is very noticeable that there is no sign of hate in the response, only uncertainty, when one remembers the awful note of hate for Edom in Psalm 137, and in the little book of Obadiah.

As a boy I was dreadfully afraid of the dark and when I woke up after a bad dream I felt like saying with the watchman, "How much longer is the night going to be?" I have often, in nights of terrible storm at sea, heard the watchman on the bridge say at each of the half-hour bells: "All is well," which means, "We are afloat, we haven't sunk, no disaster is in sight," but there is, in the cry from the bridge, this same sub-tone that the danger is not over and that there will be further news at the next round of bells—"Inquire again!"

There is no denying the fact that *we* today are in a long, terribly long, era of darkness. The watchmen on the walls in China must be saying: "Will the night ever end?" And in many another land the cry goes up, "How much longer is the night?" I can almost hear Pastor Niemöller in his concentration camp, and President Leighton Stuart of Yenching interned at Peiping, asking, "How much longer is the night to be?" And I can hear, as I lie awake at night, a million hungry frightened children crying, "How much longer is this night going to be?"

This cry of Edom has been heard across the spaces in the times of every major disaster in history, the Peloponnesian War, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile, the Fall

of the Roman Empire, the Thirty Years War, the Reign of Terror in France. The darkness lasted so long in each of these events that there seemed to be no answering cry to the urgent question, "Oh, Lord, how long?" But in every case the night, however long, came at last to an end, with a new dawn, when once more it was "a joy to be alive." All that *we* can shout back to the cry of the anxious watchmen, pacing their broken walls now in their ruined cities, is, "The morning is coming, but the night is still here—come again and inquire. We hope for better news."

But the dawn, the new day, will not come just by human ingenuity, by political schemes and social and economic panaceas alone, that try to "Simonize" the old systems that caused the long night. Our cry had better be directed to the heart of God, for our one hope is that the Great Pilot's hand may be on the rudder of the ship, and that we and He may co-operate together in shaping the course of events. We know now that human progress by human efforts is not inevitable. The escalator of natural process, that in the nineteenth century was believed to be carrying the world steadily toward perfection—"one increasing purpose"—is, plainly enough, not running today. It is off the rollers. But it is just as certain that God will not bring the new day without *us* as it is that we cannot bring it without Him. The mutual and reciprocal correspondence between the divine Purpose and the human mind is like the force of gravitation that holds the world together. This union of the Divine Spirit with the co-operative work of our minds is what holds the real world together, the world we care for. What Macbeth called "this bank and shoal of time," this ball of material stuff, rolling through space, is only a fragment of the Real World, and we must not forget that we have business with that Real World. The gateway to that

Real World is through love and truth and beauty and the will to make the highest good prevail, and it is through mutual and reciprocal correspondence with that Other Spirit who is God, that we find our human wisdom and power to end the dark nights of anguish, and to bring the new dawns for which the watchmen on the walls, and the hungry children, are crying. The only darkness I am afraid of now is the darkness that blinds our eyes to truth and love.

There is a vivid and impressive story in the Book of Kings which tells how a young prince named Hadad, of the royal family of this same Edom, fled from his home to escape Joab, David's captain, who had vowed, in a moment of passion, to kill every male person in Edom. Hadad got to Egypt in safety as a refugee, was taken into Pharaoh's palace, grew up in his household, and finally married the sister of Pharaoh's queen, who bore him a son. Years went by. Hadad prospered; became as one of the princes of Egypt; lived in plenty and luxury. But one day he heard that his old enemy Joab had gone to his final reckoning. Hadad went to Pharaoh and asked that he might depart and go back to his own country, to Edom. "Why," Pharaoh asked in surprise, "what hast thou lacked here in Egypt with me that thou seekest to return to Edom?" "Nothing. I have lacked nothing," Hadad replied. "Howbeit let me go to my own country." There will be many, when the night is over, who will, like Hadad, feel the pull to return to their own fatherland. But even now we must find our way back to the true Fatherland where *we belong* or, if we are exiles, we shall fail to be ready for the new morning with its tasks for the new day.

One of these "Oracles" of Isaiah is the "Burden of the Valley of Vision." "Burden" here probably has a technical meaning, but I should like to take it at its face value. Vision,

whether in the valley or on the mountain top, always brings a burden with it. One can never be the same again after the vision has come—"I made no vows, but vows were then made for me." So it is. If one hears that cry across the spaces—"Will the night ever end?" and enters into sympathetic *rapprochement* with the agony of the cry, he must henceforth become "a dedicated spirit" and gird himself to be a purveyor of help and relief.

It may encourage us to take note of the way Christ saw His Kingdom advancing in spite of the hindrances. Nearly every Parable of the Kingdom refers to some hindrance—bad types of soil, tares, enemies of every sort, smallness of the germ, largeness of the mass to be penetrated—but the Kingdom advances notwithstanding the unfavorable conditions. It *comes*; it is "in our midst"; it is "with you"; "among you." It is "an operative power." The germ of it, with its divine urge, has "broken in" and is here. Yes, the morning is sure to come, though the night is still here. "Come again and inquire."

## CHAPTER VIII

### TYPES OF MYSTICISM

I have very little sympathy with the frequent attempts to reduce, or regiment, mysticism to a single rigid "mystic way." One might equally well undertake to squeeze the creative poetry of the centuries down to one single type, and claim that poetry is not real poetry unless it is written in Homeric hexameters. The soul's direct approach to God, which is the heart of mysticism, is as bound to be marked by surprises, variations and novel aspects as is human love-making, which has an amazing gamut of ways of arriving at the heart's goal. When Christ restored sight to the blind He followed a different method in each case. Once He anointed a blind man's eyes and told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam and he *saw*. But sometimes He merely said: "Receive thy sight," or "Thy faith hath made thee whole," or He touched the blind eyes and the man saw. In every case the person who was healed felt that the way it happened to him was a good way. The important fact to take note of was that formerly "I was blind and now I see," and any way that accomplished that event was a good way.

I shall begin, therefore, with a very broad and inclusive definition and then I shall differentiate a variety of more specific types under the one general rubric. Mysticism, in its broadest meaning, is a type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of the soul's relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It feels like an invasion, like a thrust from



beyond the mind of the individual—something breaks in on the mind; one is *met* in the way, and it feels like the Life of God breaking in on the soul. The experience clarifies life, gives it direction, marching power, emotional intensity. One person tells us, "Out of all the gray days of my life at last I know what life means." And another tells us, "I have had an *eternal moment*, when the reality at the heart of life flooded through me like a tide of music bringing unutterable peace and joy." The recipients in all instances are stung awake and sent beyond themselves. Dante, who distinctly belongs in the list of the great mystics, said very wisely that "the experience of passing beyond the limit of humanity can never be told in words." That difficulty which confronted Dante, who often compelled words to express what they had never expressed before, confronts everybody who endeavors to interpret mysticism. Frederic Myers was confronted with this same difficulty when, in his Prize Poem, he has St. Paul say:

Oh could I tell, ye surely would believe it!  
Oh could I only say what I have seen!  
How should I tell or how can you receive it,  
How, till He bringeth you where I have been?

The most an interpreter of these higher levels of life can do is to throw light, indicate the upward steps, suggest the line of direction, give glimpses of the creative effect upon the life of the recipient and insist that there are varying degrees of mystical experience, and emphasize the point that almost everybody has had moments when life was flooded with joy and wonder, and has been carried beyond all power to express what is happening within—a moment that might very well be called "an eternal moment."

One of the most important points to keep clear, while we

are still at the stage of talking about words, is the distinction between what is properly called *Mysticism*, and what should be designated *mystical experience*. The word, *Mysticism*, should be used as the German word "Mystik" is used, for the historic doctrine of the relationship and potential union of the human soul with ultimate Reality, that is, with God. And the actual first-hand experience of invasion, of inward thrust or personal uplift, of the sense of divine Presence, breaking in from beyond the margins of the self, should be called "mystical experience." *Mysticism* would then be thought of as a doctrine, sometimes theological and then again metaphysical; while *mystical experience* would be used for the emergence of a type of consciousness, or super-consciousness, which would belong in the sphere of psychology, or rather in that higher brand of knowledge, not yet perfected, which deals adequately with the *spirit in man*.

A wholly different word, not derived from the same Greek root, *myst*, ought to be created by some scientific expert who is in the habit of creating words to match his discoveries, to cover what the Germans include under the word, *Mystizismus*. In this field or sphere would belong esoteric, or occult, phenomena, theosophical knowledge, gnosis, hidden lore, possessions, "Schwärmerei," which means buzzing in the head, psychic phenomena, borderland occurrences, "spurious knowledge"—the claptrap and mental rubbish to which scientists often refer and which they condemn under the use of my beloved word, *Mysticism*.

*Mystical experience* is as old as humanity. It has an equal date with smiling and weeping. It is not confined to any one racial stock, and it is almost certainly one of the most important of the original grounds of personal religion. It

may very well be a dawning power in the human race, with great possibility of expansion with the progress of man's soul. It may be that Tennyson's hope of the coming of "a crowning race" is not wholly vain,

No longer half akin to brute,  
For all we thought and loved and did  
And hoped and suffer'd is but seed  
Of what in them is flower and fruit.

Then perhaps it will be "natural" to live in the glory of immediate fellowship with God.

Mystical experience is a type of consciousness which is not sharply focussed or clearly differentiated into a subject-object state. The "subject" and the "object" are fused into an undivided one. This situation occurs sometimes in high moments of enjoying beauty, as Wordsworth's poetry attests, and it is present, too, in the high-tide experience of love, as Shakespeare knew when he wrote the lines:

So they loved as love in twain  
Had the essence but in one;  
Two distincts; division none,  
Number there in love was slain.

Whatever is seen, heard or felt in these high mystical moments is flooded with an inrush from the abysses of the inner life, or from beyond its margins. Deep-lying powers, not ordinarily put into play, seem suddenly to be liberated. The usual insulations, which sunder our inner life into something like compartments, seem to be shot through. We find our whole being in an integral and undivided experience. Not only so, transcendent energies from beyond our usual margins appear to *invade* the individual self. A large environing Life, an enfolding Presence makes itself felt—"a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused"

than ordinary experience reports. This "sense sublime" is of course not limited to the sphere of distinctively religious experience. The sudden insight into the meaning of a truth long sought and now at length found, high absorption in the enjoyment of music, moral exaltation of life in the pursuit of duty, serene companionship with beauty or sublimity of nature, and, as we have already seen, the awakening of love, may bring a type of experience which immensely transcends what we usually mean by "knowledge"—a subject knowing an object.

Religious mystical experience is an intense and striking dynamic variety of this fused and undifferentiated consciousness. The individual soul in these high moments feels invaded, infused, vitalized with new energies, merged with an enfolding Presence, liberated and exalted with the conviction of having found what it has always sought, and feels itself flooded with joy. "I have found," Isaac Penington declared in a rapture, "what I have sought since my childhood. I have found my God." There are many degrees and levels of this experience. It may come as a gentle, quiet, inner assurance, or it may occur with powerful emotional results. With persons of peculiar psychical disposition the mystical experience may be attended with unusual phenomena, such as automatic voices, photisms, visions, profound body changes, swoons, ecstasies. These physical phenomena are, however, only the more intense and excessive resonances and reverberations which in milder degrees accompany all psychical processes. They mark no rank of sainthood and indicate no miracle-working power. The great mystics of history have usually discounted the spiritual values of these reverberations. St. Paul ranks "speaking with tongues" far below the exhibition of *agapé*, the love that suffers long and is kind.

Mystical experience, especially in the loftiest spiritual geniuses of the race, may very well be the emergence of a new-type level of life, a higher manner of correspondence with ultimate sources of Reality, a mutation, an *élan vital* of the soul, a surge of the entire self toward ineffable fullness of life. It may be in the higher sphere of the inner life an instance of what biologists call a *tropism*, i. e., an inherent tendency of a living thing to turn toward the sources of its essential nutriment. There can, I think, be no question of the functional value of mystical experience. The experience as an inner life event, is unmistakably one of the great tap-roots of personal religion, bringing, as it does, to the recipient undemonstrable, but at the same time irrefragable, certainty of the Sources of higher Reality in contact with the personal self, and revealing a superaddition of life-functions and new interior depth-levels.

Mystical experience almost certainly has a noetic, that is to say knowledge-bringing value, although I am inclined to discount "oracular communications." I do not look for mysterious "information," or ideas with novelty of content, through the secret door of mystical openings. "Ideas," "communications," "openings of information," always reveal an historical background, and show the marks of the gestation of group-experience. They do not drop ready-made into the world from some other region. This is strikingly true of the "openings" of George Fox and his forerunner, Jacob Boehme. The important point to emphasize is the leap of insight through heightened life, the intensification of vision through the fusing of all the deep-lying powers of intellect, emotions and will, and a corresponding surge of conviction through the dynamic integration of personality.

It seems pretty clear that the saints, the prophets, the

founders of religions, in the main the spiritual leaders of the race, have been recipients of this "heightening of life," this "intensification of vision," and that through this mutual and reciprocal correspondence with the world of unseen and eternal realities, they have shaped the line of march, and have discovered the springs and resources of spiritual progress on toward the City of God. It is difficult to envisage what our world would be like if this line of mystical revealers and healers and helpers were eliminated from the story of the human race.

This mystical experience, in its essential aspects as *experience*, is pretty much the same through the centuries and in all lands. It varies greatly in degree of intensity, from a mild heightening of life-level to the rapture and ecstasy of union with God—"lost in God, in Godhead found." What accounts for the historical *types* is, therefore, not the nature of the experience as such, but the prevailing theological or metaphysical conceptions of the time and place, which color the *expectation* of the given mystic, and form the background setting through which he interprets his illumination:

For every fiery prophet in old times  
And all the sacred madness of the bard,  
When God made music through him,  
Could but make his music by the framework and the chord.

Or, to say the same thing in Shelley's words:

Life, like a many-colored dome,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

We remain human, place- and time-bound beings, no matter how exalted the invasion from Beyond may be, and what we expect, what we think, about ultimate truth and reality, is bound to form the tinge of color or, to put it in

Tennyson's figure, "the framework and the chord" which give shape and form to the experience, especially when it is reported, told, and interpreted. Mysticism, therefore, as a doctrine of contact with or union with God, is bound to be, through the centuries, marked by varying types.

Plotinus (205-270 A. D.), profoundly influenced by Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and especially by the third-century conception of Divine Reality as an Absolute Unity beyond all finiteness and change, held, as he was consistently bound to hold, that God cannot be found or even thought of in terms of finite things, or transitory happenings, or in any states of mind however exalted. God, according to this conception, is utterly beyond the *here* and the *now*. He is forever above all that can be seen or felt or known or named. There is, however, something in the human mind which is forever unsundered from Absolute Reality—a point of junction which remains "unlost," and so there can be a return to the Fatherland from which we have come. But, on this formulation, it is bound to be a way of negation, a *via negativa*. The God of this formulation is above and beyond all that is concrete and finite. He is not "this"; He is not "this"; He is not "this." The person who would reach the goal of bliss in union with the Absolute God must therefore rise above all states and processes of mind, above emotions and thoughts, above aspirations and deeds, and find in wordless communion, in a super-consciousness, transcending images or ideas or mental states of any kind, a junction of the unlost Soul-Center with Absolute Reality—"a flight of the alone to the Alone." That formulation quite obviously makes Mysticism take the way of *ecstasy*.

In his famous account of the great experience of himself and his mother at Ostia, St. Augustine says: "We came to our own minds and *we passed beyond them*." "By the utmost

leap," they reached *that which Is*, which never comes to be, for *it eternally Is*. Plotinus and after him St. Augustine, profoundly under his influence, more or less fixed the type of expectation through which mystical experience through the Middle Ages took its form and color. The unique theologian who in the early sixth century wrote under the name of "Dionysius" pushed the doctrine of the negative way and the goal of mystical ecstasy to its extreme limit. He became an unescapable influence all the way down to the Reformation. The mystics of the fourteenth century, the major ones—Eckhart, Tauler, the Author of *Theologia Germanica*, and Ruysbroeck—were men of genius and they struck out many fresh lines of mystical interpretation. They found unique expressions for the unsundered junction of the soul with God, such as "Apex of the Mind," "the Ground of the Soul," "Divine Spark," "Synteresis," "Uncreated Center," "Inward Light," but the general direction of their interpretation was the way of negation and the climax of ecstasy—the leap beyond the mind.

It is one of the tragedies of history that the discovery of a Concrete Infinite was so long delayed and that so many of the mightiest intellectual guides and spiritual geniuses of our race had to formulate their thought with an abstract Infinite at the center of their thinking—an Infinite entirely beyond, above, and sundered from all finites, an Absolute Other.

This situation is peculiarly acute in the philosophy of the Upanishads, the Vedanta, and the theistic conceptions of Sankara, and as a consequence the great systems of mysticism of India take the way of negation—"Neti," "Neti," "He is not this"—and culminate in a state of unknowing, if not in Nirvana, with this world and finite experience *maya*, illusion. The mystical experience of all these great



personalities, both East and West, was always vastly more significant and dynamic than the intellectual formulations would indicate, but there was always the tragedy of an intellectual defeat, even at the highest point of mystical attainment. The Greek Parmenides, a gigantic figure born c. 514 B. C., who is one of the "fathers" of Plato's thought, poured this false Infinite into the great stream of Western metaphysics, and it is a nice question whether in the case of Parmenides, or some time later, there was a contact, which we cannot now trace, with Indian thought.

Next in importance to the flowering of Mysticism in the fourteenth century was the burst of mystical life which came with the Counter-Reformation in Spain and France. Some authorities would, no doubt, put the latter movement first in importance. In any case a vast infusion of life and spiritual power poured into the world with vitalizing quality through the experiences, the contagion, and the writings of the dominant personalities of this creative period. "Stout Cortes" was not stouter of heart or bolder of spirit than were these contemporaries of his who explored the uncharted and unfathomable seas within themselves and tracked their way across still stranger jungles and stretches of desert in the human heart to the shoreless Mother Sea whose tides seemed to surge into their channels.

The great names of this mystical succession are those of St. Teresa, the greatest mystic of the group, and St. John of the Cross, in Spain, her extraordinary disciple; St. François de Sales, St. Jeanne Françoise de Chantal, and St. Vincent de Paul, in France. These Counter-Reformation mystics were followed by a unique outburst of Quietist mysticism, led by Miguel de Molinos in Italy, though born in Spain, and by Madame Jeanne Marie Guyon and François Fénelon in France. This later stage, under the name of

Quietism, was severely treated by the Church, but Quietism was implicit in the entire movement, even before it became explicit in the seventeenth century.

Quietism by no means signifies lethargy and inaction. It is not a religion of lotus-eaters. The Quietist took a course of life and action that would make most active Christians quail with fear and slink to cover. It is not a question of action or non-action; it is a question of *the right way to initiate an action that is to have spiritual significance.*

The entire movement, beginning in the period of the Counter-Reformation, took the darkest possible view of human nature. It held an utter miserabilism of man as "a creature." Nothing divine, nothing that has spiritual value, can originate in man, the total ruin. Our new inter-war theologians, who hold that God is absolute Other, and man a very sin-sick and fallen creature, still have something to learn of the utter worthlessness of man, and the complete dualism of the below and the Above, from these Counter-Reformation mystics. The only preparation, according to them, for God to move and act through man is the suppression and repose of all one's own powers, the absence of all strain and striving, the annihilation of all confidence in one's own capacities, the complete quiet of the "creature." Then out of this silence of all flesh, this inward calm, this pure repose, divine movings will come, grace will be granted and "spiritual fecundity" will be produced.

There can be no question, I think, of the greatness of the significance of this spiritual Odyssey. The impact of it was momentous and the books it produced are among our best spiritual treasures. But there is no doubt in my mind that this interpretation of human nature is a mistaken one, and this dualism of the self and the Divine Other is excessively

stated and so *out of focus as to be untrue* to the actual facts of life.

I can deal with only one more type of Mysticism in this essay, and I shall call it, after a phrase of Clement of Alexandria, the "mutual and reciprocal correspondence" type. It is best illustrated by St. John's figure of the Vine and the branches—the vital organic relationship of God and the soul and the interflow of life between the Above and the below. St. John's Gospel with its central Mysticism of Light and Love and Truth and inward Knowing, and the Spirit as the Guide and Comforter, has been, through the centuries, the major literary source of this vital Mysticism. It is vividly interpreted in St. Paul's sermon on Mars Hill, "In God we live and move and have our real life," and it breaks forth in most of his Epistles: "Beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord we are transformed into the same image from one stage of likeness to another by the Spirit of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> The transfiguration of Christ on a mountain apart, when the divine radiance, the Fatherhood and Heart of God, broke through the veil of flesh, is a supreme instance of this mutual and reciprocal correspondence. We already have here an approach to a Concrete Infinite. It is present in St. Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." It is frequently found in St. Bernard: "I have many times been conscious of God's presence in me." It is characteristic of St. Francis of Assisi whose mysticism was an unbroken intimate love-affair. It breaks in as a vital experience, in spite of formulations, in the case of Eckhart and St. Teresa, and in all the members of their schools.

Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) is a unique interpreter and

<sup>1</sup> II Cor. III:18.

transmitter of this vital mysticism. There are many strands of thought and inheritance in Boehme, some of them difficult to fathom, but "the way of salvation" of which he is the "father" is a very significant *process of life*, through which the Life of God operates effectively in the life of man. "The center of man's soul came out of eternity, as a mother brings forth a child out of her own substance and nourishes it therewith, so doth God with man, His child." "The Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father, must become man and *be born in you*." "Christ is the Eternal Life-Tree of the universe, in whom all the new-born souls of men shall live as springing, flowering branches or twigs. In Christ we are all only *one*, as a Tree in many boughs and branches." The entire business of life is to "return to the soul's eternal native country and abiding Home."

Boehme's influence on later mystical life and thought in England and America has been very great. His writings were translated into English between the years 1647 and 1661. His greatest influence is seen in the later writings of William Law (1686-1761), one of the most impressive of all English mystics. "Man," he wrote, "has a Seed of the Divine Life given unto the birth of his soul, a Seed that has all the riches of Eternity in it and is always wanting to come to birth in him and be alive in God." "There is but one salvation for all mankind and that is *the Life of God in the soul*."

We have not yet succeeded in proving the *direct* influence of Jacob Boehme on George Fox (1624-1691) and the mystical aspect of the Quaker movement, but there is an unmistakable similarity between the man who died in 1624 and the man who was born in 1624. They both lived and thought and worked in terms of this vital Mysticism. George Fox reveals again and again the thrilling experience of the

breaking in of the Life of God which enabled him to "walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every person," even when his way led to prisons and dungeons. "Be staid," he wrote to one of his Friends, "in that principle of God in thee, that it may raise thy mind up to God"—*"Thou wilt find Him a God at hand."*

This vital life of mysticism is very much in evidence in the loftiest poetry of England and America. It is a powerful feature of the poetry of Vaughan, of Traherne, of Quarles:

I was flax and He was flame of fire;  
Our firm united souls did more than twine;  
So I my best beloved's am; so He is mine.

It rises very high in William Blake when he succeeds in uttering his authentic word. It is a constant note in Christina Rossetti, in Alice Meynell, and in Coventry Patmore. G. K. Chesterton said once: "There is in the last second of time, or hairbreadth of space, before the iron leaps to the magnet, an abyss full of all the unfathomable forces of the universe." It is a very suggestive illustration of that eternal moment when the leap of emergence occurs and the soul finds God, when the Above and the below meet. Wordsworth has powerfully described it in "Tintern Abbey"; Tennyson in "Higher Pantheism"; Browning in "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day"; Francis Thompson in "In No Strange Land"; Emerson in "The Over-Soul"; Walt Whitman in "Passage to India"; Lowell in "The Cathedral"; and Whittier in "Eternal Goodness."

What is hardly less important, unnamed and unnumbered hosts of persons on farms, in shops, in studies, in colleges, in the army, in the kitchen, in church, on the highway, have had this vital experience, have found their way to the Fatherland where they belong. I have had many

personal letters from persons who have had this experience, and there are many more reported in James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, and in James B. Pratt's *Religious Consciousness*.

It may be, as Chesterton once said, that "the truth at the heart of things is too terribly simple and naked for the sons of flesh"—too simple and naked for the mind to "think out" and "explain." It was J. E. McTaggart who defined Mysticism as "contact with Reality—without the help of discursive reason." But when the inner self is fused and heightened it may come into mutual and reciprocal correspondence with God. It may find itself in parallelism with the currents of the Spirit. It may see with new eyes and know with the certitude of experience, and arrive at the goal. It was child-minded George Macdonald who wrote:

Leave me not, God, until—nay, until when?  
Not till I am with Thee one heart, one mind;  
Not till Thy life is light in me, and then  
Leaving is left behind.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SPELL OF IMMORTALITY<sup>1</sup>

I am considerably disillusioned over *arguments* for immortality, or, for that matter, for any of our supreme value-aspirations. We shall of course not stop arguing or searching for proofs. God forbid! As long as we continue to have minds of our type, which include logical capacity, we shall search and reason and argue and endeavor to prove the realities which are essential to the loftiest kind of life. A dour Scot on his deathbed heard that the minister was coming to pray with him. "But I dinna want onybody tae pray wi' me," he said. "Wull," his wife said, "then he'll speak words of comfort tae ye." "But I don' want tae hear words of comfort." "What do ye want then?" asked his wife. "I want tae *argue* wi' him."

That expresses a striking trait of the *homo sapiens*. But it is rather pitiful to discover how thin and weak are the logically formed cables which the greatest minds have flung across the chasm between the here and the hereafter, for the construction of the bridge we need for complete logical assurance of travel heavenward. Nobody has put the fact of our ignorance more clearly, or in more beautiful phrase, than has Emerson in his essay on Swedenborg: "The secret of heaven"—by which he means immortal life—"is kept from age to age. No imprudent, no sociable angel ever dropped an early syllable to answer the longings of saints, the fears of mortals. We should have listened on our knees

<sup>1</sup> The Ingersoll Lecture for 1943.

to any favorite, who, by stricter obedience, had brought his thoughts into parallelism with celestial currents and could hint to human ears the scenery and circumstance of the newly parted soul." That negation of facts is put as well as it can be put. Nobody will improve on the grandeur of Emerson's paragraph. But he did not stop with the negation, and the human race through the centuries has never stopped, and never will stop, there. His brief and positive addendum is that the scenery and circumstance of the newly parted soul "must tally with what is best in nature, It must not be inferior in tone to the already known works of the Artist who sculpts the globes of the firmament and writes the moral law. It must be fresher than rainbows, stabler than mountains, agreeing with flowers, with tides and the rising and setting of autumnal stars. Melodious poets shall be as hoarse as street ballads when once the penetrating keynote of nature and spirit is sounded—the earth-beat, sea-beat, heart-beat which makes the tune to which the sun rolls, and the globule of blood, and the sap in trees." <sup>2</sup>

In a certain sense this addendum of Emerson's is "argument," not an unemotional calm statement of fact, like his previous sentences. But if one is to "argue" at all, this structural form of Emerson's argument is undoubtedly pointed in the right direction. If there is any rational ground for expecting immortal life, it must be looked for in the prophetic structure of the world we already have on our hands, it must tally with the best we know, and especially with the moral significance of man's inmost being, and with the upward curve of the historical process, for there is an upward curve. We are so made that we should find the world not only *intolerable*, but unintelligible as well, if it

<sup>2</sup> Essay on Swedenborg in *Representative Men*.



carried in its structure no indication of significant finality, no promise of increasing purpose, no moral meaning in terms of the creative results of its processes.<sup>3</sup> We may not go quite as far as the prophet Amos did when he tells us that he saw God forever holding a plumb-line in His hand, which means that there is a principle of moral gravitation, as universal as the principle, whatever it is, that holds the world together and that twice each day raises the tumultuous ocean, heaving from pole to pole, in our well-known tides. But all our wisest prophets in all ages have insisted that the universe is built on moral lines, is an intelligible world—going somewhere—and can be counted on to meet and answer the hopes it has raised in the minds which it itself has produced.

Pascal, who is one of these wise prophets, declared that we should not be seeking for the supreme realities if we had not already, at least dimly, found what we are seeking. We do not have appetites and cravings for what we have not already tasted. And it may well be that the universe that has planted in us aspirations and longings for the adequate fulfilment of life on new and higher levels has already formed in its moral and spiritual structure the provision for the realization of all the hopes it has raised. We take our solid ground and we stake our hopes on the fact of the grandeur and the nobility of the human spirit when it comes out of its torpor and really finds itself. We may well trust the inevitable permanence of character.

We are obviously at the moment passing through an era of depressed hopes. The faith of our generation in the moral and spiritual structure of the universe, and its confidence in the promise of increasing purpose, have dropped to a low level. Our age does not feel the thrill of moral

<sup>3</sup> See Urban's, *The Intelligible World*, New York City, p. 343.

grandeur which profoundly moved Kant, and which made Wordsworth write the lines of his "Ode to Duty":

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;  
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

We cannot subscribe today to Tennyson's optimism, and we read Emerson's Essay on "Compensation" with a sense of wonder that any wise men could have believed that the universe was so sensitive to moral issues and so loaded with spiritual purpose. But in a happier era, when sanity returns, as it will do, and we once more begin building the Kingdom of love and truth, instead of watching the *débâcle* of ancient civilizations, we, or our children, will once more thrill with hopes and expectations, and will find it easy to believe that the universe carries in its structure a *nisus* toward significant finality, though we shall still have our doubts of the imminence of the millennium. In 1913 George Santayana wrote: "The spirit is not dead in the lull between the seasons of steady blowing. Who knows which of them may gather force presently and carry the coming age steadily before it?"

But, as I have already said, or implied, I have not come here to *argue*, nor do I claim to be in the order of the prophets, with the inherent right to prophesy to a generation that profoundly needs prophetic vision. And yet I can sincerely say, as Emerson did on a famous occasion, I did not come here just to wear out my boots. This Ingersoll Lecture ought to be the outstanding spiritual event of the year, for which reporters and interpreters of life would be waiting with breathless expectation! In the great days of the Renaissance the students in the Italian universities used to call out in chorus to each new lecturer: "Tell us of the

soul; tell us of the soul." I have not heard anyone calling for that type of information in my day. It is rather, "Tell us of the latest theory about atoms"; "What do you know about *genes*?" "Give us some new light on space-time," "How can we make synthetic rubber?" But in spite of these calls from the seats, or lack of calls, I am going to insist on talking about the *soul*, or its modern equivalent, and its eternal destiny.

One of the greatest mysteries in the world is the mystery of the origin and destiny of our type of mind. We who have this *nous*-type of mind, as Plato called it, not only know, but have the unique experience of knowing that we know, of knowing ourself as the knower of objects. We look before and after, which means that we can recover the past that is gone. We can anticipate the future, which does not exist except for our minds. We can bind past and future together in a momentous duration, out of which by our decision of will a new and unique event emerges, which would not be there but for us. We can *see* not only what is there for senses, but we can *see* "what ought to be," whether it *is* or not. We carry within us an august moral dominion over events. This means, I think, that we have a pedigree which does not stem wholly from the biological order, is not inherited from flat-nosed baboons, and is not explained by atoms or genes, or any vibrating stuff of the earth's crust. Heraclitus was right when he said: "You can never discover the boundaries of the soul by travelling in any direction." And Emerson was sounding a companion note when he said: "The philosophy of six thousand years has not searched the chambers and magazines of the soul." We shall not recover our faith in immortality until we rediscover the moral and spiritual grandeur of the spirit-mind in us—the *nous* which links us to a *noumenal* universe,

Not matter, nor the finite-infinite,  
But this main miracle, that thou art thou,  
With power on thine own act and on the world.

At least we carry something within us that *might be* immortal, that is worth transmission to a more permanent sphere, and that *ought* to "bloom to profit elsewhere."

We live and do our thinking, for the most part, too exclusively in the sphere and dominion of what Coleridge, and Kant before him, called the "understanding"—*Verstand*. Its function is to organize, and categorize, that is to say, to handle logically, intelligently, the facts of the possible experience of a world that can be presented to sense, dealt with in terms of space-time and explained in a relation of cause and effect. But they both, and all the perennial thinkers, recognize in us higher capacities of Reason, Nous, Pneuma, Logos-Sophia, Vernunft—"Reason in its most exalted mood"—by which we enter, partake with, and share in an Over-world of essential spiritual Reality. On this level the Above and the below meet and we *see* rather than argue. We *live* our way into the Eternally Real rather than endeavor to prove and defend it by the way of categories, intended for lower-case matters. Of course this distinction must not be pushed to the extent of dualism. It only means that Reason operates on more than one story, more than one level, and that we are as truly rational beings when we have imaginative dominion over experience, when we are enjoying Beauty and Truth and Goodness and the Love of God, as when we are analyzing the functions of radium or iron pyrites.

What I propose to do, then, on this auspicious occasion, is to present some experiences of persons through the ages who have lived their lives in the vivid and vital faith that they have come hither from a divine Fatherland, to which

they belong, a faith that "though inland far they be," there is an unlost eternal quality in their inner being. And I shall select for my specimens, out of the cloud of witnesses, those persons who in a peculiar degree have lived under a spell of immortality, and have made their exodus utterly convinced that He Who brought them out was bringing them in—in fact that the eternal God was their home. It seems pretty clear that the more completely a person possesses himself, the profounder his interior life becomes, the more he comes under the spell of eternity and becomes convinced of enduring reality. Love of the highest order not only brings refulgence to this life, but it demands and implies eternity. It must be understood of course that I am not thinking of eternal, or immortal, life in terms of a cheap or false infinite which just goes on like a number system that has no last number. I am not asking my hearers to join in the old-time hymn:

When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.

"Eternal life" is the entrance upon an absolutely satisfying experience whether here or elsewhere, in which the soul has found itself joined indissolubly with its Object, revealed to us best in Beauty, Truth, Goodness and Love. These values can never pass into nothingness, nor can the soul, that in God is united to these Realities. In them one lives, by them one lives, they are his life, and it opens out inwardly with ever intensified joy and insight. "He whose heart has been set on the love of learning and of true wisdom," Plato says in the *Timaeus*, "and has exercised this part of himself, that man must without fail have thoughts that are immor-

tal and divine, *if he lay hold on truth*; and so far as it lies in human nature to possess immortality he lacks nothing thereof." <sup>4</sup> It is thus that man becomes a spectator of all reality and is an indissoluble part of an eternal realm. The blessed life is thus not the reward of goodness, but the practice and enjoyment of goodness itself.

I am quite aware that these testimonies which I shall present of persons who have lived under the spell of immortality do not "prove" the objective reality of immortal life. The only way to "prove" it to everybody's satisfaction would be to have the witnesses come back with authenticated evidence of their personal identity, and testify here and now to their actual experience of immortal life. *That* they decline to do! We cannot "summon" them to tell us of the scenery and circumstance of the dwellers in eternity. What, however, is notable about the lives of these specimen persons who have lived under the spell of immortality is the fact that their minds have been raised to a unique quality by their attitude of faith. Power to stand the universe has come into them. In many instances they have done something more than "stand" "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." They have been triumphant and radiant persons, equipped cap-a-pie with spiritual armor, combating wickedness in high places, and taking a manly part in endeavoring to remake their world on new-model lines. What I have called "the spell of immortality" has fed them with a peculiar type of *vitamins*, has made them extraordinarily efficient specimens of the race, and at the very least has given them a unique preparation for transplantation into another stage of life, if peradventure that is in the order of the eternal nature of things. They threw themselves on God, unperplexed, and went out nothing doubt-

<sup>4</sup> *Timaeus*, 90.

ing that "what is excellent, as God lives, is permanent." Perhaps the fact that this high faith, this spell of immortality, is so effective in raising the level and quality of life may be admitted to be an evidence that the universe—the universe of Spirit—is *backing* the faith with actual resources.

It is high time for me to introduce my witnesses. Socrates, as Plato has interpreted him in the Dialogues, is one of the most striking instances of a person who lived under this spell of immortality.<sup>5</sup> For him, life is a rehearsal for death, and death is a door to true life. From somewhere, perhaps from the Orphics or from the Pythagoreans, Socrates very early came upon the overmastering insight that the soul, which in Platonic circles means the intellectual, moral, spiritual self—the *nous*—was of divine origin. He furthermore felt throughout his life that he was under divine guidance, that he carried deep within himself a heavenly Light or Guide and that he was set apart for a divine mission, to be a spiritual midwife for those who were laboring to give birth to high thoughts, and to be a gad-fly to sting the sluggish into life and action. He thought of himself as a divinely sent prophet and he faithfully fulfilled his mission, which as one might well expect, resulted in condemnation to death.

His spell of immortality first comes clearly to light in his farewell speech to his Judges in the *Apology*. He tells them that it is a wonderful circumstance that his divine inward oracle which always checked him when he was on the point of taking a wrong course, even in a trivial matter, made no sign of opposition during the entire conduct of the trial. "What is the explanation," he asks, "of this silence? I will

<sup>5</sup> It is difficult to decide whether to say "Socrates" or to say "Plato." We shall never know with certainty how far Plato was reporter and biographer and how far he was dramatic creator.

tell you. It is an intimation that what has happened to me is a good and that those who think death is an evil are in error. Wherefore, O Judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty that no evil can happen to a good man either in life or in death."

An opportunity came to him, as told in the Dialogue *Crito*, to escape from the prison and to save his life. Both his divine Voice and the laws and covenants of his country forbade him to make the escape. "This is the voice I seem to hear murmuring in my ears," Socrates says at the end, "like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic; that voice, I say, is humming in my ears and prevents me from hearing any other suggestion. Leave me, then, to fulfil the will of God, and to follow whither He leads."

Then comes the great scene in the prison at the end, as told in the immortal passage in the *Phaedo*. A group of his friends met early in the morning of the last day in the prison and the day was spent listening to Socrates' arguments for immortality and discussing them. But it is not the arguments, whether they are of Socrates or of Plato, that have made the *Phaedo* an immortal book. He is arguing to prove what he already *knows*. It is the scene at the end and the vivid picture of a great man dying under the spell of immortality, that makes the *Phaedo* such an exalted book.

At the beginning of the end Socrates says: "Fair is the prize and the hope is glorious. Since the soul is shown to be immortal, the venture is a glorious one. And I say let a man be of good cheer about his soul. When the soul has been arrayed in her own proper jewels—temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—she is ready to go on her journey when the hour comes."

Then Crito says: "In what way shall we bury you, Soc-



rates?" "In any way you like, but first you must catch *me*, the real me. Be of good cheer, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with *that* whatever is usual, and what you think best."

Then Socrates went out to bathe and prepare himself, took leave of his wife and children, and at sunset the jailer came to announce that the time for the poison had come. As he went out for the cup he burst into tears. "Crito made a sign to the servant, who was standing by; and he went out, and having been absent for some time returned with the jailer carrying the cup of poison. Socrates said: 'You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters shall give me directions how I am to proceed.' The man answered: 'You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down and the poison will act.' At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear, or change of colour or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, as his manner was, took the cup and said: 'What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to God? May I, or not?' The man answered: 'We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough.' 'I understand,' he said, 'but I may and must ask God to prosper my journey from this to the other world, and so be it according to my prayer.' Then raising the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept, not for him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having to part from such a friend. Nor was I the first; for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got

up, and I followed; and at that Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud and passionate cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: 'What is this strange outcry?' he said. 'I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not misbehave in this way, for I have been told that a man should die in peace. Be quiet then and have patience.' When we heard his words we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard and asked him if he could feel; and he said, No; and then his leg, and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: 'When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end.' He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said—they were his last words—he said: 'Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?' 'The debt shall be paid'; said Crito; 'is there anything else?' There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth. ♀

"Such was the end of our friend, concerning whom I may truly say, that of all the men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best."

Hardly less exalted, and even more penetrated with philosophic thought, is Socrates' speech on Love in the *Symposium*, which is under the same "spell." "Souls which are pregnant," Socrates says—"for there certainly are men who are more creative in their souls than in their bodies—conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive, for exam-

ple, wisdom and virtue, temperance and justice. The soul that is smitten with a passion of love will create many fair and noble thoughts, until he grows and waxes strong and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science of Beauty—Beauty absolute, simple, everlasting, without diminution and without increase, a Beauty which if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold or silver or other fair things. Remembering how in communion with that Beauty, beholding it with the eye of the mind, such a person will be enabled to bring forth, not images of Beauty, but realities, and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue, to become the friend of God and to be immortal.”<sup>6</sup> Here we have the account, in as lofty prose as has ever been written, of a man going about his affairs of life in the consciousness that he was under divine direction, and living in the splendor and power of an eternally significant life. The striking passage on Immortality in the *Republic*,<sup>7</sup> and the passages in the *Gorgias* and the *Laws*, are quite certainly Plato’s own views, and it must be taken for granted, I think, that belief in Immortality was a settled attitude of mind with Plato, but I believe it is safer to attribute “the spell” to Socrates.

Never before, and I assuredly think never since the first century of our era, have men lived and wrought out their faith under such a spell of immortality as was the case with the first followers of Christ in the high tide of their experience. We can never get back to Plato and find the real Socrates, untouched by Plato’s genius. Even so, and even more emphatically, we can never get behind the early interpreters and find the real Jesus of Nazareth. When we first meet Him He is already the Christ of the ages and His fol-

<sup>6</sup> “Symposium,” Socrates’ Speech on Love, greatly reduced and contracted.

<sup>7</sup> Sec. 611.

lowers are living and carrying on their creative work, under the spell of immortality, which His life and teaching, His crucifixion and resurrection have produced upon them. Instead of dealing, therefore, with the central Figure, as I did with Socrates, I shall here deal with the circle of transformed believers, who very quickly leaped to a new level of life and power under the impact of what seemed to them Christ's continued spiritual presence in them, which is promised in two great sayings: "Where two or three are met in my name there am I in the midst" <sup>8</sup>—"Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." <sup>9</sup>

Some very important exaltation of their minds happened on the Day of Pentecost, when they consciously, or unconsciously, passed over from a visible Leader to an invisible Presence, and a new infusion of Power surged into them and raised them to an unexpected level of boldness, with the beginning of what I have been calling a spell of immortal life. Peter's speeches in the early chapters of Acts strike a new note of conviction. He is changed from a timid disciple, concerned only to save his skin in the general débâcle of hopes, to a perfectly fearless apostle of a new faith and a living hope. We cannot claim the witness of the two epistles that bear Peter's name as certainly the expression of his experience, but at least they express the elevation of mind of that early group. And here we have "a living hope of an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not, wherein we rejoice greatly." <sup>10</sup> And the second Epistle—a still later creation—proclaims the "day-dawn and the day-star," that rises, not in the sky, but in the human heart. <sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Matt. XVIII:20.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. XXVIII:20.

<sup>10</sup> I Peter I:3-9.

<sup>11</sup> II Peter I:19.

The unknown prophet who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews thinks of the followers of Christ as living in the power—the dynamic—of *an enduring, or indestructible, life*, which is precisely what I mean by the spell of immortality.<sup>12</sup> The elevation of mind, the joy of living, the new power to suffer and endure without having the joy spoiled, and finally the conquering faith that overcame the Roman Empire and transformed the barbarian invaders, came to birth through this spell of Eternity, which the events in Galilee and Judea had produced in the souls of men. It is not possible now or ever to write a factual, rationalized biography of Christ, or to prove in modern historical fashion the events which so amazingly changed the lives of men and women in those creative periods, but the fact is indubitable that something occurred which poured new life into the course of human history and liberated the greatest forces that have ever shaped the direction of life in the western world. Nowhere else has the spell of eternity been so effectively in evidence.

The great Christian who wrote toward the end of the century under the name of "John" felt this spell in a unique degree. His writings are marked by an extraordinary joy and radiance and there is a remarkable elevation in his thought: "Behold what manner of love the divine Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God and, beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that we shall be like Him."<sup>13</sup> "We have the witness that God *hath given* us eternal life."<sup>14</sup>

The Fourth Gospel, by this same man, throbs and vi-

<sup>12</sup> Heb. VII:16.

<sup>13</sup> I John III:1-2.

<sup>14</sup> I John V:11.

brates with this spell of immortality, written about persons who have "received the power to be children of God, being born not of blood, nor of the impulses of the flesh, but of God." <sup>15</sup> He and his friends have learned how to live with untroubled hearts, with a peace which the world can neither give nor take away, and with an inward victory that overcomes the world.<sup>16</sup>

I believe it can be said without exaggeration that nobody in history has lived under this spell of immortality to the same extent and degree as did the man whom we call St. Paul. Over him, as over Wordsworth's Child, immortality brooded like the day. He had been carefully trained and entrenched in the legalism of his nation. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. His entire hope and expectation in life attached to the destiny of his own people and to the religion of his fathers. Suddenly, unexpectedly, though not without a psychological preparation for it, his entire outlook and all the aspirations of his inner being underwent a profound transformation—a "sea-change." He became a disciple of the new faith, and in due time an apostle, i. e., a missionary, of it, and eventually the creative interpreter and formative moulder of Western Christianity. He, more than any other person that ever lived, took it out of its exclusive racial setting and shaped the lines for a universal, worldwide movement. His labors were herculean, his sufferings were such that he called it "dying daily"; he showed the genius of a world conqueror, and the results of his Gentile mission, which can hardly have been more than twelve years in length, were amazing, not to say miraculous. He showed himself always and everywhere throughout these years to be a person living under the spell of immortality. He thought

<sup>15</sup> John I:12-13.

<sup>16</sup> John XIV-XVII.

of the Christ who had called him out and made him an apostle no longer as a Jewish Messiah, but as a "new Adam," "a life-imparting Spirit," the beginner of "a new creation." The partaker of this new creation, through this new Adam, entered upon a new type of life which carried in itself an eternal quality and was essentially immortal. St. Paul could share so intimately and completely in that victorious Christ-Spirit that he could say, as he did, "It is no longer *I* that live, but this divine life which Christ inaugurated lives in me." <sup>17</sup> "God who said, 'Let Light shine out of darkness,' the *fiat lux*, has shined into my heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." "And we all beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, which means His essential Nature, are transformed into the same image, the same eternal quality. Though our outward man decays our inward self is constantly renewed. And we *know* that if our earthly tent is dissolved we already have formed within us a permanent self which God and not man has formed of eternal heavenly stuff. And God has made us for this very end, that mortality might be swallowed up of life eternal. We therefore walk, live and act in this faith, that as soon as we are absent from the body we shall be at home with the Lord." <sup>18</sup> If the question is raised, as it is bound to be raised, with what kind of form, or bodily expression, shall we go on into our new stage of life after the dissolution of the old form, St. Paul answers that it will be a form adapted to the new environment, as all types of bodies in earth and sea and air are so adapted, and it will be woven of the stuff of the new spiritual realm.

The secret of this faith, this spell of immortality in St.

<sup>17</sup> Gal. II:20.

<sup>18</sup> This is the substance of Chapters III-V of II Corinthians, freely rendered.

Paul's life, is the conviction that eternal life has already begun, that the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead already dwells in him. As Baron von Hügel put it, the presence of this intrinsically immortal eternal Spirit in him constituted his surety of immortality.<sup>19</sup> That is the meaning of his great saying, "For me to live is Christ"—living *is* the possession of this divine Life in me. In the light of this it becomes perfectly natural for him to say as the final issue draws on in his Roman prison: "I am in a strait betwixt two possibilities, whether to depart and be with Christ, or to stay and minister to you. If I were to think only of myself it would be far better to depart." And to the Colossians he wrote from the same prison: "He hath delivered us (which means *me*) out of the power of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love." And the last word before the executioner came was: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, now the crown of righteousness awaits me." That is no cheap reward. It is not a golden crown, but a crown of life, the fulfilment of life, righteousness brought to its full glory, the legitimate result of that type of life.

The intellectual and spiritual world of the Middle Ages owed an enormous debt to Boethius who in his prison in Pavia about the year 524 A. D., wrote for posterity his *Consolation of Philosophy*, which portrays a man of noble quality, condemned to prison and death unjustly, but able in that time of darkness and confusion and defeat to live and to write under the spell of eternity, as he did. His definition of eternity, which is strongly Platonic, dominated the thought of Aquinas and was the spiritual heritage of the Middle Ages: "Eternity is the simultaneous and perfect possession of enduring life." It is not something you argue

<sup>19</sup> Baron Friedrich von Hügel, *Eternal Life*, London, 1913, p. 70.



about and speculate upon. It is something you possess and in the power of which you live.

St. Augustine had a similar experience of eternal life. His moment of vivid apprehension of Eternity, in the great experience at Ostia, convinced him that, if that touch of Eternity were continued, Eternal Life would be like that moment.<sup>20</sup> In a striking sentence St. Augustine said: "You come to life again by remembering your proper life which you had forgotten."<sup>21</sup> "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." But he adds later: "Is not the blessed life precisely *that* life which all men desire? We evidently may even here *possess* that life."<sup>22</sup>

St. Francis of Assisi does not belong in the list of those who apprehended Eternity by a flash of intellectual insight. He did not inherit the wisdom of Plato, or Boethius, or St. Augustine. Henry Hallam contemptuously dismissed him, as most historians did a hundred years ago, as "a harmless enthusiast, pious and sincere, but hardly of sane mind." This "harmless enthusiast" has become for us in this generation, Romanists and Protestants alike, the supreme saint of the Middle Ages and the person who came nearest of anybody who has lived since the apostolic period to reproducing in the world the passion of love, the spirit of self-giving devotion and the spell of joyous living in the heavenly Father's world, which characterized the divine Galilean. He washed out every taint of barter and *quid pro quo* from his religion. He sought nothing for himself—not even heaven. He utterly disproved Satan's sneer that nobody "serves God for naught." He came as a *joculator dei*, a min-

<sup>20</sup> Conf. IX, 10, 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Trin. XIV, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Conf. X, 27.

strel of God, thrilling and singing and laughing his joy in the Lord. If he kissed lepers, and swapped clothes with beggars, and went to visit the Soldan, and became literally God's poor little man, it was not to buy favor with God. It was because he above everybody else had discovered Christ's way of life and it filled him to the brim with joy and radiance. Somehow by a stroke of genius he broke his way into the stream of eternal life, possessed it and exhibited its thrill and power and contagious quality.

*The Mirror of Perfection* has preserved for us this St. Francis as the *joculator dei*. "Drunk with the love and compassion of Christ," it says, "blessed Francis on a time did such things as these. The most sweet melody of spirit boiling up within him frequently broke out in French speech and the veins of murmuring which he heard secretly with his ears, broke forth into French-like rejoicing. And sometimes he picked up a branch from the earth, and laying it on his left arm, he drew in his right hand another stick like a bow over it, as if on a viol or other instrument, and making fitting gestures, sang with it in French unto the Lord Jesus."

This is the real St. Francis as his most intimate brothers saw him and knew him. We need not trouble ourselves over the stigmata, or the miracles in his story, since the most significant miracle is this divine lover, living among men under a spell of eternity already realized. We do not need to quote dying words from this saint to verify his assurance, for he had for years been walking joyously in his high places, on his sky-road. But near the end, he added a last verse to his "Canticle of the Sun" with praises to "Sister Death," and he told the brothers around him that he was "in haste to go to God" and he continued to "sing to God who hath

given me the joy of His grace." One of his closest brothers has pictured the end for us, in *The Mirror of Perfection*: "In the year of our Lord 1227, on the fourth of the nones of October, he passed away to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he loved with his whole heart, with his whole mind, his whole soul, his whole strength, his most ardent desire, and fullest affection, following Him most perfectly, running after Him most swiftly, and at the last reaching Him most gloriously."

Ramon Lull, an outstanding scholar and prolific writer of the thirteenth century, persistent missionary to the Moslems at the risk of his life, a Franciscan Tertiary, and finally a martyr, due to his missionary zeal, was another Franciscan who lived and worked under the spell of immortality. He did not, like Tertullian in his Montanist days, or like the youthful Origen, have a clear passion for martyrdom. But Lull lived throughout his missionary years constantly facing death and full of joy that he was counted worthy to live or die as a bearer of light and truth. His little book "Of the Lover and the Beloved" is a beautiful revelation of an active life of saintliness, whose inward spring was the power of an immortal life. He lived as a Lover of the Eternal and he joyously died a Lover of his Beloved.

It would be an unnecessary as well as an impossible undertaking here to review the testimony of the great mystics of the ages. They have found their way while living into such an assurance of union and communion with God that for them there is nothing they can apprehend that death can do to endanger this community of spirit with Spirit. The greatest of them have made the discovery that there is an unlost soul-center in the deeps of man's being which has never "gone out" from God. There is a *synteresis*, or central

substance—the very self of our self—as Meister Eckhart would say, which belongs in common with God and with us. As the unborn child is attached at a certain point to its mother, the mark of which remains forever afterwards, so, though no physical parallel can truly image it, this inmost soul-center binds us back indissolubly into the Life of our spiritual Origin and like a tugging natal cord of life, connects us with our Source. For the mystic this Something of God in us is not a theory or speculation, but a first-hand apprehension which makes Eternal Life the one real life, and the transitory, temporal stage a parable, *ein Gleichnis*, of the real life in God. “When the Flash is caught in the fountain of the heart,” Jacob Boehme wrote, “the holy Spirit rises up within, like the dawning of the day, like the morning glow.” This spell of immortality of which I have been speaking, is the usual, the normal, result of the mystics’ sense of union with Eternity.

From somewhere, from the mystics before him, or from the depth-life of his own experience, George Fox came under this spell of eternity. “As I was walking in the fields, the Lord said unto me, ‘Thy name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.’” Another time he says, “As I was walking toward the jail, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘My love was always to thee and thou art in my love.’ I kept still, having my spirit gathered into the love of God.” On another occasion he declared: “Now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new; and all the creation gave unto me another smell. . . . I was renewed into the image of God by Christ Jesus to the state of Adam before he fell.” His greatest saying is not surpassed by any who have lived under this spell. He said: “I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but I saw that there was an infinite ocean of light

and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I saw the infinite love of God."

Few modern persons have had this spell of immortality, this practice of eternity, in more thrilling fashion than Eugénie Smet, the daughter of a burgher of Lille in France, who came to be known as *Mère Marie de la Providence*. She was the founder of an order of women who even during her short life spread widely over the world. She insisted on remaining in Paris throughout the German siege and the Commune, and she slowly died there in 1871 with the agonies of cancer. But through it all she was utterly absorbed with joy in God and the reality of Eternal Life. To the very last she carried on a tender and unceasing service of Love to the suffering and poor around her. "Let us feel," she said, "that Eternity has begun; whatever pain we are going through, let us find joy in that thought. In all things I can only see God alone." This attitude of mind could be produced in thousands of instances if space allowed for the reports.

Frederic W. H. Myers is the best representative of the modern man, the classical scholar and the scientifically trained person, who lived in the vital faith that immortality was as clearly established as any of the facts of the universe and who lived with an exaltation in that faith. He wrote near the end of his life: "I have often felt as though this present age were unduly favored;—as though no future revelation and calm could equal the joy of this great struggle from doubt to certainty—from the materialism or agnosticism which accompany the first advance of Science into the deeper scientific conviction that there is a deathless soul in man. I can imagine no other crisis of such deep delight." . . . "In the infinite universe man may now feel, for the first time, at home. The worst fear is over; the true

security is won." <sup>23</sup> This calm expression of a hope at the end of his life fits perfectly the hope of his youth which runs through the prize poem of his university days:

Ah, what a hope! and when afar it glistens  
Stops the heart beating and the lips are dumb  
Only my spirit to His silence listens,  
Faints till she finds Him, quivers till He come.

The boys in the streets of Ravenna used to say, when they saw Dante go by, "There goes the man who has been in Hell." What they did not realize, and what many readers of the *Divine Comedy* since have not realized, is the fact that Dante was in his true element, and the home of his soul, only in the *Paradise*. He was in the truest sense the man who had been in the Heavens. Everything rises in orderly movement, as Dante always held, by a specific levity, to its true place. Man's true place, the Fatherland of the soul, is God, and Dante found himself gravitating to the center of all Reality and arrived there. "In seeing Him alone is our Peace," and in the last three cantos of his poem, Dante has described how he passes into that peace, "from time into Eternity," where he found himself face to face with "that Love which moves the sun and all the stars." His pilgrimage upward, the ascent measured by the mounting beauty of Beatrice's smile, reveals in words of the loftiest poetry that has ever been written the spell of immortality under which Dante lived and wrote.

We must take note of the fact, however, that most of the persons whose testimony I have given lived in the times when the Ptolemaic Astronomy gave a live and vivid imaginative picture of the home of the newly parted soul. There, a little above man's head, near enough for a Jacob's

<sup>23</sup> *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, London, 1904, Vol. II, pp. 280-281.

ladder to span the intervening space, were the crystalline domes of the sky, forming, in easy conception, the many mansions of the Father's House. The floors of the domes, though transparent to the eye, were perfectly solid foundations for millions of spiritual dwellers. It required very little effort of faith to anticipate the scenery and circumstance of the orders of the angels and the vast company of "the spirits of just men made perfect."

The Copernican revolution has changed all that. It has immensely expanded our conception of the physical universe. The earth is only one small planet revolving about the sun as its center while suns and worlds innumerable circulate in unimaginable reaches of space. There are no domes; there is no sky for real ladders to climb; there is no home of the soul *up there*, where Dante ascended with beatific joy. The vast expansion which the Copernican astronomy has brought to our minds has been attended by a notable shrinkage of our pictorial imagery of the scenery and circumstance of souls in the after life. This failure of imagination has brought with it a serious shrinkage of the expectation of immortality. We shall not recover the "spell," of which I have been telling, unless we succeed in forming vital and vivid imagery for the minds of men to body forth their faith. Faith flourishes only when the imagination is captured. We shall not have what John Buckingham has called "the true immortal knighthood of the soul" until we are able to conceive the medium of new and finer relationships with one another and with God after we have dropped off "the mortal coil."

It needs, however, to be pointed out that most of the persons I have cited, persons who lived in the Ptolemaic Era, did not rest their hopes *primarily* on the comfortable assurance of crystalline domes as their future habitat. The

thing that mattered most with them all—at least with the folio edition types of persons—was the fact that there is something in man's spirit which is of the essential nature of God and is bound to be forever where He is. For Plato the beautiful soul has come out of Eternity, belongs in the Eternal and will forever belong to that Realm of Being. St. Paul is not so much concerned with the *whereabouts* of the soul as he is with the *medium* of its perdurance and its expression. For him there seems to be no difficulty in supposing that the God who has given every form of life in this multifarious world the "body" that fits its environment will, out of the unimaginable stuff at His disposal, produce for us spiritual bodies for the life in the realm of the Spirit, "bodies celestial," fitted for the radiance and beauty of the new domain of eternal life.

Even Dante, for whom crystalline domes seem so important as visible supports for spiritual feet, does not really make these domes an essential feature of his eternal Fatherland. In the last analysis the domes fall away as no longer necessary for the reality of the immortal life. All that is essential is the organic unity of the Blessed Community of God and immortal souls. God is the Center of the mighty Rose of the Blest, and the saints of the ages—those worthy to be saved—are the petals of the heavenly flower, in one living unity of life and love with Him. Even the flower is a poetic symbol. The essential reality is the opening out upward of the human spirit into a Community of life with God as the moving Life of it, with our immortal spirits fashioned finally of the eternal stuff of His being, and ever after living and joying in co-operating beauty and love and service with Him—life is not *life* without a sphere of action. As L. P. Jacks has admirably pointed out,<sup>24</sup> while the

<sup>24</sup> *The Confession of an Octogenarian*, New York, 1942, pp. 116, 146-147.



universe is unquestionably Copernican when viewed from without, it is as unquestionably Ptolmaic when experienced from within. The spiritual universe, the real universe, has man's soul for the center, and God, the other Ultimate is the Love that moves and orders the entire spiritual realm.

What we need, and all we need, for the recapture of imagination and for the recovery of the spell of immortality is a more genuine apprehension of the true nature and interior depth of spirit in man, and a more vivid sense of the reality of God as Spirit. If the ultimate Reality of the universe is an Over-World of Spirit, as the greatest minds that have ever lived have thought to be the case, and if the most unique thing about us is, not our bipedality or body-form, but our possession of self-consciousness and the power to transcend time and space and to originate creative action, we already belong to a World of the eternal type, or at least may belong to it. We are essentially already great amphibians, built in our inmost structure to be the denizens of either of two worlds, as well suited for the Over-World as for this world down-under. George Santayana said once with his usual insight: "Whoever it was who searched the heavens with a telescope and found no God would not have found the human mind if he had searched the brain with a microscope."

The form and manner of our life after the cocoon of cellular tissue has fallen away we cannot further conceive. We have so far been using brain as our medium—sometimes adequate for our purposes and sometimes woefully inadequate. This is adapted to fit only the world down-under. If it is a highly good one it is destined to be preserved in a bottle of alcohol; if it is a common one it is destined to return to the dust of the earth's crust. We cannot perdure and go on in our higher World with a form and medium for

the essential personality which is only suited for a world of matter in space-time. The secret of that new "form and medium" is strictly kept. So, too, is the secret of every significant *mutation* kept until the mutation arrives, nevertheless the mutation occurs. So, too, is the secret kept how the hereditary traits of the generations behind him, and his own marvellously adapted form, come with the new-born child into the here over the infinitesimal bridge of a cell of protoplasm. The secret is kept how a voracious caterpillar emerges into a gorgeous butterfly delicately flitting in the air from flower to flower for the drops of honey. We can only say as St. Paul did: "God gives it a body as it pleases Him," even as He giveth to each form of life its body well adapted to its peculiar environment. We may, with Browning's *Grammarian*,

Throw on God (He loves the burden)  
God's task to make the heavenly period perfect the earthen.

We find ourselves brought up at last against a problem before which all the other problems of life fall back to a secondary place. Has this universe a single story to it, or is it a world of two levels? Is it a world strictly confined to time and space and matter, or is it a world which includes, as well, a realm of spiritual realities of a higher order, where what begins on the first level is carried on, completed and fulfilled? If the one level, the single story, is all there is to it, then all the problems over which the amateur theologians contend seem to me to be futile questions. It comes back, after all, to a single vital issue. Is the God whom we invoke, in actual fact, GOD, or only an imagined reality that we have "fulminated" out of our agitated minds to dispel our fears and to argue about? If God is GOD which means in other words, Spirit, Life of our lives, Love at the heart of

things, the over-arching, under-girding Source of all that is eternally Real and True and Beautiful and Good, then we already have a two-storyed universe with a Home in it for all we love and a Garden in it greater than Eden, where transplanted human worth *will* bloom to profit elsewhere. This faith at least may "call home our hearts to quietness."

I may fittingly conclude with the wise words of Sir Thomas Browne:

"Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and Fortunes, do err in my Altitude; for I am above Atlas his shoulders. The earth is a point not only in respect of the Heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us; that mass of Flesh that circumscribes me, limits not my mind; that surface that tells the Heavens it hath an end, cannot persuade me I have any: I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty; though the number of the Ark do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind; whilst I study to find how I am a Microcosm, or little World, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of Divinity in us, something that was before the Elements, and owes no homage to the Sun." <sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *The Religio Medici and Other Writings of Sir Thomas Browne*, Published in London by J. M. Dent and Co. and in New York by E. P. Dutton & Co., 1909, p. 83.

## CHAPTER X

### CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT<sup>1</sup>

One comes back from a study of the Quaker literature of the seventeenth century with the profound impression that these Children of the Light did actually have a fresh revelation of God. The most remarkable thing about the movement is not that its leaders founded a new state, or worked out a new and, I think, an extraordinarily happy form of religious organization, or discovered a new principle of social fellowship, or inaugurated a new type of human service; it is, rather, that they came into a new experience of the present reality and the living presence of God. They passed from a religion based on the accumulated deposit of other men's faith, and on the authority of books and creeds, to a religion based on their own vision of God, and tested by their own experience of His transforming power.

The seventeenth-century Friends have given us an extraordinary testimony—as clear as any in Christian history—that there is a way to God through the human mind and the human heart. The word which they repeat on almost every page of their voluminous tracts and journals is this: God reveals Himself within man, manifests His will directly in the heart, and is actually Himself present in the Shekinah at the center of the soul. They appeal for proof to the testimony of prophets and apostles and saints, but in the last resort they rest their case on their own soul's experience.

<sup>1</sup> This was the original name of the *Friends*, or *Quakers*.

They have here struck, I believe, the permanent basis of spiritual religion, and they have brought into bold emphasis a principle which, not only for us but for coming generations, is to be a central one—namely that religion is the life of God in the lives of men—an affair of inward witness and experience and actual practice.

The Society of Friends is in essence and principle an “open” type of society, that is, or should be, freshly transformed by a constant renewing of the mind to meet the growing light of truth. But in actual fact it has for the most part historically been a “closed” society, going on statically with the inadequate formulations of the seventeenth century. George Fox’s early accounts of his experience plainly show that he was profoundly influenced by the mystics and spiritual reformers, and all his early accounts imply the inauguration of a free, living, growing movement, unhampered by rigid form and system. The Preface to his *Great Mystery* written in 1658 is the clearest early statement of the nature of the new movement.<sup>2</sup> He assumed that he was forming a divine-human Society that would progress through the years by a constant interaction between the human factor and the ever-present Divine Spirit.

But as soon as we come to examine the way in which these first Friends formulated their principle and interpreted their experience, we discover, what we also discover in every other religious movement, that they did their thinking in the terms of their age, saw the light through the tints and colors of their psychological climate, and mixed their seed of eternal truth with some temporal chaff. If the generations which followed had proved to be a *veritable apostolic succession*, there would have been a gradual sloughing

<sup>2</sup> It was actually written by Edward Burrough but it embodies Fox’s views.

off of the temporal elements and an increasing vision of the permanent truth at the center, but, unfortunately, history again repeated itself, and the unessential, even the unimportant, aspects of primitive Quakerism were raised to a level with the central truth, and the *interpretations* of the fathers became as sacred as *their actual experiences* were, and in spite of the *theory* of continuous revelation, the forms, manners and customs of the first period came to be the norm and standard for all time, while not seldom the glorious experiences of a past generation were retold as though no one any more expected a present Pentecost, or a fresh bubbling of the inward spring.

Our age is critical and does not hesitate to call petrified things *petrified*, or dead things *dead*. We are like the little girl in the story who with a flash of simple honesty, said, "Why, the King is naked," when all the courtiers were flattering him on his wonderfully delicate, invisible suit of clothes! We can analyze and question. It remains to be seen whether we can grasp and utilize the Eternal aspect as successfully as we can diagnose the weaknesses, and point out what temporal aspects should be lopped off.

I have said that the permanent religious contribution of Quakerism is its testimony of experience to the fact of direct Divine-human fellowship, and *continuous revelation*. I shall now attempt to point out what seem to me to be faulty formulations of this principle, and what transmitted conceptions seem to me to be dead conceptions. I am dealing critically only with the outstanding original *formulations*. I am not blaming those formulators; I am merely saying that what fitted the intellectual climate of the seventeenth century is inadequate for our generation.

1. The early Friends did their thinking on the basis that the universe is a rigid dualism. This dualistic chasm was

characteristic of the age and was a distinct feature of Descartes' philosophy. There were for them two worlds—the world which they called “natural,” and the world which they called “divine” or “supernatural.” These two were sharply divided with a gulf fixed between. The Friends, and particularly Robert Barclay, held as rigidly as the Calvinists did to an undivine natural order, marred by the fall and now under the dominion of Satan. “Mere man” was, with them as with their opponents, depraved and wholly lost. The “light” which was central in their message came wholly from without. Barclay says <sup>3</sup> that “by the fall the divine witness in man was extinguished as a candle is blown out and from our corrupt human nature no saving light proceeds.” “We certainly know,” again says Barclay <sup>4</sup> “that this light of which we speak is not only distinct but of different nature from the soul of man and its faculties.” And finally in a passage so plain that nobody can mistake its import, he says in *Universal Love*: “Friends believe not this seed or light to be any part of man's nature, or anything that properly or essentially is of man.” <sup>5</sup>

Robert Barclay (born 1648 died 1690) was a highly endowed person, of rare natural gifts. He was broadly educated and carefully trained as a scholar. He possessed a beautiful inner spirit. His character was marked by sweetness and tenderness. His religion went all through him. His soul was reached by a vital experience and the springs of his life were fed by an experimental discovery of God. But he did not come in contact, as Fox and Burrough and Penn did, with the powerful stream of thought which came through Erasmus and the Spiritual Reformers. He was

<sup>3</sup> *Works* (Phila. 1831), Vol. I, pp. 150-151.

<sup>4</sup> *Works*, Vol. II, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> *Works*, Vol. III, p. 224.

deeply schooled in Scotch Calvinistic theology and then soundly trained in the Roman Catholic Scots College in Paris which trained missionaries to win Scotland back from Calvinism. His uncle was head of this college. Barclay's main concern is to point out how Quakerism stands in reference to Reformation doctrines. We find ourselves in the *Apology* back again with the Augustinian and Calvinistic conception of man, against which, I am convinced, George Fox was in powerful revolt in the period of his great experience, as William Penn was throughout his life.

Barclay goes back to the accepted dogma about man. "Man by nature," he says, "as he is *man*, is corrupt and fallen." "No real good proceedeth from his nature as he is man." "A seed of sin," Barclay says, "is transmitted to all men from Adam"—that position is taken straight out of Calvin's *Institutes*.<sup>6</sup> No good can be ascribed to natural man, "he is polluted in all his ways." "The natural man is wholly excluded from having any place or portion in his own salvation, by acting, moving or working of his own."<sup>7</sup> The Inward Light, in Barclay's thought, is what the theologians call—and it is, too, Barclay's phrase—a *vehiculum dei*, a supernatural vehicle, or device, by which the distant God can operate on the soul which has no spiritual capacity of its own.

Isaac Penington is as unequivocal. Here are a few out of a multitude of similar passages: "By the old corrupt nature of the mind can no man do the things contained in the law."<sup>8</sup> "Man is dead *naturally* and his eye blinded."<sup>9</sup> "As for free will; we own no such thing as free will to do good in the fallen state. But the Spirit of the Lord changeth

<sup>6</sup> Book II, Chap. I, sec. 8.

<sup>7</sup> These passages are all found in Barclay's *Apology*.

<sup>8</sup> IV, 207.

<sup>9</sup> IV, 206.



and reneweth the will in the day of His power.”<sup>10</sup> Combatting someone who held that there are some glimmerings of spiritual light in fallen man, Isaac Pennington says, “If thou meanest a light distinct from the Spirit and divine nature of God, I desire thee to manifest it from Scripture, for the death and curse came upon Adam’s posterity who are dead in trespasses and sins.”<sup>11</sup> This seed, again he says, is “a principle of God’s nature, but not of man’s nature. Man is earthly, but the light that shines in him is heavenly.”<sup>12</sup>

We find this position everywhere maintained in the early formulations. Man *as man* is natural, carnal, devoid of a glimmer of Divine light. The Divine principle which is “given” to him is utterly, absolutely foreign to his own nature. It comes wholly from the outside, from another world. It is a gift purchased by Christ’s death for man, and it is *superadded* to him as a substance from another realm.<sup>13</sup> “It is,” says Barclay, in a classic passage, “a holy substantial seed, which many times lies in man’s heart as a naked grain in the stony ground.”<sup>14</sup>

This formulation is based, not on experience, but on the traditional conceptions of the period. It differs only very slightly from the prevailing Calvinism of the time. There is in it the same double-world scheme. The natural faculties of man are again in disrepute. Revelation is wholly supernatural and miraculous, and everything spiritual comes from another world into this. Even on the point where the Quaker seemed to make his sharpest break with Calvinism—namely on the issue of election—he stood on very boggy ground. He made saving faith a “gift” which came into man

<sup>10</sup> IV, 232.

<sup>11</sup> IV, 206.

<sup>12</sup> IV, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Stated and discussed in *Apology Propositions*, V, VI.

<sup>14</sup> *Works*, Vol. II, p. 140.

with this supernatural light, and he had no way of explaining why everybody did not exercise faith and obedience, except on the supposition that there were "different measures" of light in different men; which, alas, is our old enemy of election smuggled in again. Isaac Penington positively says that "Faith is not found in man's nature, but it springs and grows from the precious seed, so that it is a gift to be waited for and obtained from God." <sup>15</sup> No reason is ever assigned, or, on this basis, can be assigned why some resist the light and others receive and obey it.

2. This conception gives no ground of explanation for any spiritual transactions. Religion, and all religious phenomena, become on this basis supra-rational, in fact super-human. They do not spring out of man's nature and they have no inherent relationship with his life as a man. In fact, Barclay insists that man's part in his own salvation is *passivity*. "The Light strives and wrestles with all in order to save them; he that resists its strivings is the cause of his own condemnation; he that resists it not, it becomes his salvation; so that in him that is saved the work is of the grace and not of the man." <sup>16</sup>

We have here continued under a new form the old supernaturalism which appears in the scholastic theory of miracles, of inspiration and of ecclesiastical rites. God breaks in from without, mysteriously. The step which the Quaker had taken was to claim that God breaks into everybody, but this formulation has not discovered an organic bond of union and fellowship. The light and seed in a man invade him from another world. Man and God are never conjunct. This conception does not give a basis for a genuine Divine indwelling. The natural world remains throughout

<sup>15</sup> *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 394.

<sup>16</sup> *Works*, Vol. II, p. 148.

a stubborn "other," receiving visits but never being permeated and transfused. We never get an organic relationship, and, even when the figure is changed from "light" to "seed," the seed is treated as a foreign substance, lying in alien soil. There are two worlds with a gulf fixed. There is Divine visitation, but not Divine interpenetration.

3. This conception has ministered to a spurious kind of infallibility. Other Protestants held that the infallible Spirit had used certain holy men of antiquity as oracular mediums through which to communicate His revelations. Their human faculties were suspended, they offered no resistance whatever, and added no human color to the white light of truth which came through them. It was absolutely God's word which was communicated, and therefore it was an infallible standard. The early Friends had this same conception of Divine communication, only they extended its scope in an imperial way. Any person might be an oracular medium. Here is what Isaac Penington says: "If any man speak he must speak as an oracle of God, as the vessel out of which God speaks, as the trumpet out of which he gives the sound." "In the Light," he says, "I meet with infallibility. . . . The Spirit breathes infallibly, begets infallibility, leads infallibly." <sup>17</sup> Once more he says, "The Light of God's Spirit is a certain and infallible rule, and the eye that sees it is a certain eye." This is the position generally held by the early Friends, and it logically follows from their central formulation. Divine illumination, spiritual truth, religious revelation come wholly from without and therefore when an "opening" comes unhindered through a person it is absolutely of God and so infallible. One sees the danger of this theory in the case of James Nayler, who exaggerated his claim of guidance.

<sup>17</sup> *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 494.

4. This position favors, even where it does not positively lead to, asceticism. There is a radical schism between the natural and the spiritual. They belong to different world-systems and cannot be brought into organic union. They are forever stubbornly antithetical. Isaac Penington, in the following passage is only saying what from his basic conception you expect him to say: "Man is to come into the poverty of self, into the abasedness, into the nothingness, into the silence of his spirit before the Lord, into the putting off of all his knowledge, wisdom, understanding, abilities, all that he is, hath done, or can do out of this measure of life into which he must travel, that he be clothed and filled with the nature, spirit and power of the Lord."<sup>18</sup>

If that which is spiritual can come only from beyond man's nature and faculties; if it is all a work of the invading Light, then of course man's best work is the suppression, or even the killing out, of all that is his by nature.

5. This conception has inclined Friends to the ecstatic and quietistic operation of the Spirit.

The words of prayer and ministry were believed to be the words of the Spirit, speaking through the person, not the words of the person himself, and this operation came suddenly, unexpectedly, "at seasons," upon the person, he knew not when or how. This view of the work of the Spirit brought into special prominence persons of a distinct psychological type. Those who heard inward voices, those who had incursions, those who felt out spiritual states and conditions, those who dropped easily from the level of consciousness to the subconscious level, were supposed to be more specially the vessels of the Spirit. The result was that the idea became current that the ministry of "unction" was a message communicated on the spot, and delivered pre-

<sup>18</sup> *Works*, Vol. IV, p. 54.

cisely as it was received with no human tinge. The minister was a passive channel—an empty vessel. Another result was that the moving of the Divine Spirit was thought of as sporadic. He moves only at times and seasons. He must be patiently waited for. “The Spirit of the Lord God,” says Isaac Penington, “striveth with fallen man, at seasons, according to His good pleasure.” This belief in the sporadic working of the Spirit led Barclay and many after him to teach two degrees of Divine influence. There is a general Divine work for the common, ordinary tasks of life; and a special, extraordinary work which leads to profound spiritual changes, to prayer, and to particular acts of worship or religious service.<sup>19</sup> On this basis the personal self never gets spiritually transformed, and so an organ of the Divine Spirit.

6. Finally this primitive formulation leaves no basis for a genuine test of guidance. The Divine Light, or voice, is its own authority; there is no other authority. The “opening” comes from yonder; it is not of this world, it has no root or ground in man’s nature; it is supra-rational and, so, cannot be tested by reason or judgment, nor brought to the court of earthly wisdom. There is, consequently, no adequate test to be found in the writings of the first generation.

I have somewhat mercilessly touched what seem to me to be the weak spots in the original formulation of the Quaker principle. There are, of course, other difficulties which appear even to the superficial reader: the early Friends’ ignorance of historical development and their lack of historical perspective; their failure to grasp the true use of the Scriptures; their confusion of, and failure to differentiate, the outward, historical work of Christ and the mystical, inward work of the Spirit; their inability to unify mystical

<sup>19</sup> See *Barclay*, Vol. III, p. 22.

experience and the objective facts which form the core of evangelical doctrine. These were, however, minor points of weakness; they were not structural defects. The other troubles, which I have pointed out, are structural. They have, throughout, menaced us with defeat. Everyone must have asked why it was that the most dynamic religious movement of modern history—a movement which initiated a Copernican revolution in religion, and which, in its days of pristine vitality, seemed likely to become a universal, and world-conquering type of Christianity, why this movement fell so far short of its prophetic promise, and went so sadly awry on shoals and inlets. The reason is not far to seek. As soon as this mighty experience of the living Christ, the present Spirit, was formulated into a working basis it was inadequately formulated. Once more God and man were put asunder, the two worlds were cut apart into a divine and an undivine one, and the vain and hopeless attempt was made to spiritualize this world with a religion which was confessedly non-rational, and *not potentially grounded* in the nature of the very person it was to spiritualize. Here was an *impasse*, and Quakerism has succeeded, in so far as it has succeeded, in spite of the formulation of its interpreters, and because practice has been better than theory.

In none of the miserable “separations” in the nineteenth century has the central issue ever come to the front. Neither Hicks, nor Gurney, nor Wilbur found the true clew to a Quakerism of apostolic power. Each one of them ran out on a side path and missed the trunk line. The Inward Light, as it is treated in the writings of these three men, however diversely they use it, is in no case adequately interpreted. The religious world has looked on with unconcern and rightly so, while the fierce contests have been waged over

this view or that, for it was a Lilliputian battle between "big endians" and "little endians." The great central principles of those first mighty days have been buried deep under a mass of word-comment like Enceladus under Etna, and Friends have not known how to put their candle on a candlestick so that it would give light to the whole world.

From the nature of the case a religion of the primitive Quaker type cannot be handed on from father to son. It cannot be reduced to formula and catechism. It cannot be crammed into a set of notions or performances. It is a heritage which can be possessed and held only by those who re-live it for themselves. It must be the continual product of personal experience; it must be born anew through the travail of each new generation; it must live and flourish on the vision of hearts that see for themselves.

Look you, our foreshore stretches far through sea-gate,  
dyke and groin——  
Made land all, that our fathers made, where the flats and  
the fairway join.  
They forced the sea a sea-league back, they died, and their  
work stood fast.  
We were born to peace in the lee of the dykes, but the time  
of our peace is past.<sup>20</sup>

Yes, the time of our peace is past! *We* must know in our days, as that first group of Friends knew in their day, that our lives are in contact with the living Christ, and that God's tabernacle and Shekinah are within us. The prime condition of an apostolic Quakerism, then or now, is a vital, first-hand experience of God's immediate presence in the soul, and a direct inward relationship and fellowship with Him.

"Knowledge of acquaintance" is vastly of more impor-

<sup>20</sup> Rudyard Kipling.

tance than "knowledge about." And yet no experience can remain disembodied. It must clothe itself in form and language, in order to express and communicate itself. If we see and hear and handle with our hands the Word of Life, we must attempt to tell our generation what the experience means, even though we know that our formulation is "in part," is temporal, is colored by our psychological climate, and will in turn be "done away" by the dawning of more complete truth.

Once more we must start with the fundamental fact that there is something of God in every man, that there is a continuous revelation of the Eternal Spirit through these temporal lives of ours. But we cannot today think of God as essentially external to His creation, as wholly sundered from us in being, and in His infinitude utterly unlike us in our finitude. The two-world theory has become impossible to those who think in the terms of this generation. It is a dead conception. We have come back, by the help of psychology and modern philosophy, to the position of the first apostle of Christianity that every person lives and moves and has his real being in God. We, and all things that are, are of Him and through Him and to Him. He is the Vine, we are the branches; He is the Body, we are the members; He is the All-pervading Spirit of Life, we are tiny organs of that life—points of manifestation, either showing in our lives His glory, or revealing that which must be conquered before He can enter into His peace. He has always been showing Himself; He has forever been working things up to better; He has, from the beginning, been travailing in mingled suffering and joy to bring forth sons; He has realized in one Life the travail of His soul, and has there shown us Himself and our possible selves—the Eternal Spirit exhibited here in time.



Revelation is no miracle. It is as normal a process as the coming of spring flowers; it is a process as old as the morning stars. There is some revelation of God wherever there is a person, and the whole creation has been revealing, from glory to glory, through law and prophet, through saint and martyr, what Canon Wilberforce finely called, "the Jesus-Christness of God."

We shall not, then, hold today that God is wholly "yonder," a lonely Absolute; that we are down here in an undivine, natural world, with a gulf fixed between, and that from far away, as from another star, He sends a Light into our darkness, or puts a "tiny seed" into the foreign soil and stony nature of our hearts. We believe rather that man, by his inherent nature, is essentially a spiritual being. Wherever there is personal self-consciousness, it differentiates into higher and lower aspects. There appears always a double movement, like the upward pushing germ and downward pushing root of the growing seed, a double tug of momentous import.

In many persons this differentiation is so sharply defined that there seem almost to be two selves—Israel, the prince of God, and Jacob of bartering, commercial spirit; Saul doing that which his truer self "would not," and Paul living by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus—two selves in one person. The supreme issue of life is the issue between these two selves—between the outward and inward man, the old and the new self, the flesh and the Spirit, Satan and God.

This life were brutish did we not sometimes  
Have intimations clear of wider scope,  
Hints of occasion infinite, to keep  
The soul alert with noble discontent  
And onward yearnings of unstilled desire.

But personal life is not brutish, for we are so made that we do have intimations clear of wider scope, because, though finite, we are of the infinite, and though a part of nature we are bound up with God, even as our own thoughts are bound up with the total whole of our consciousness and character. There is, thus, as the early Friends were forever saying, something in us which steadily condemns the lower impulse and reveals the higher life. We live continually on the perilous edge between an upper and lower—between heaven and hell. Even when we stoop to the muck-rake, there is a shining crown and a beckoning hand above. This ever-advancing possible self, at war with our lower nature, is a Divine revelation to us. It is an inward light, not shining from some foreign world, but springing up within, because the life of God is an inherent and elemental part of our being, and *this Life is the inward light*.<sup>21</sup> Into every personal life, according to its level, there comes a Divine ideal—a heavenly vision. It is literally closer than breathing—never far enough away to be near. The truth is that our souls open inwardly into God's Spirit, though the language of three-dimensional space is insufficient for such truths. We can live in toward the Divine center, or we can live out toward the husk of things; we can become corporate with Him by acts of response, or we can become more and more isolated by living unto self—by being idiocentric—which means living by “natural instinct.”

But this inward contact with God, this Divine Light in the soul gives us no basis for an infallible revelation. In fact, an infallible and final revelation in this evolving world of ours is a sheer impossibility, and would be calamitous if it were possible. Each person must of necessity apprehend truth through the stock of ideas which his mind possesses,

<sup>21</sup> As John's Gospel says (I:4).

and he must express himself in the terms of his local and temporal environment. He cannot get away from his past or his present. He cannot be a colorless organ—a will-less and emotionless instrument. He is to the last a person, and the truth which comes through him, even though he be ecstatic, will have the mark and brand of his personality. If the personality were different, the report of truth would be different.

The vision of truth in one generation must be corrected by the larger wisdom of that which succeeds it, and the message of one individual must always be tested by the spiritual experience of his fellows, for "God reveals Himself in many ways," and one infallible utterance, fastened upon the race at any point, would corrupt, not bless, the world.

This view of the Inward Light gives no ground for lazy confidence in miraculous interposition. Whittier once asked a Friend what he was doing to provide for his old age. "Nothing," replied the Friend; "the Lord will provide." "No, He won't," boldly declared the poet. The same announcement can be made to the person who expects that some powerful revelation of truth is to break through him, though he is doing nothing to make himself an organ of the Divine Spirit. All spiritual ministry, in this or any age, comes through a prepared person, who has been learning how to catch the mind of the Spirit, and how to speak to the condition of the age.

Finally this view of the Inward Light fits in with the whole process of Redemption. This God Who shows His will and purpose within us, and Who is tugging at us to draw us homeward has been working through the whole of His creation for the unveiling of sons of God and has, in the Divine-human Son—the Christ of Galilee and Calvary

—laid bare His Heart, revealed His oneness with us, and given us a clear sight of what He means for us. But once more Salvation is not miraculous interposition to save us from dire consequences. Salvation is sin-delivered, victorious, personal life. It is the conquest of our lower self, the penetration of our whole being with the life of the Spirit. It is inward whiteness joined with throbbing passion for goodness. It is the new man of the Godward side triumphant and supreme over the old man of the fleshly side. This situation does not come by a lightning flash. It is a spiritual affair and comes by personal choice and decisions.

It is both a Divine and human work. God has been working since "the beginning" to redeem His potential child, but He cannot make of the twain—of our divided hostile selves—one new man until we co-operate and become at one with the Divine which draws us.

We know we are nothing, for all is Thou and in Thee;  
We feel we are something, that also has come from Thee;  
We know we are nothing, but Thou wilt help us to be.

Hallowed be Thy name, Hallelujah!





















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